

Art & Eros Magazine



Volume Seven: Winter 2021

Art & Eros Magazine: Volume Seven

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Cover picture: Sunflowers by Michelle.

If you have a submission for the **Art & Eros Magazine** feel free to contact the magazine. The editor can be contacted at

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“The proper function of man is to live, not to exist.
I shall not waste my time trying to prolong them.
I shall use my time.”

Jack London

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Prologue

Obelisk Press of Vancouver is proud to publish the winter 2021 edition of ***Art & Eros Magazine*** which serves to feature the work of aspiring artists. The ***Art & Eros Magazine*** welcomes submissions on a quarterly basis.

In this edition we feature an interview of Vancouver artist Michelle and some of her pastel art. There is an article about Lawren Harris, one of the Group of Seven. Rose Lang has sent a submission from Paris. Aki has sent some poetry from Tokyo. William submitted a small piece from New York (he gives his apologies – super busy). Ani wrote a surreal poem. There are also some poetry from the *This Great Society* archive. A kind thank you to each of our contributors.

Please feel free to submit your short stories, prose, poetry and artwork to

pbruskiewich @ gmail.com

There is no fee to submit. There is no writer's fee provided by the journal for those who submit. The publishing rights remain with the writer.

New Art Works

An Interview of Michelle

Saturday Dec. 2021

In the Atelier

Patrick: Good morning, Michelle.

Michelle: Hi.

Patrick: How are you today?

Michelle: I'm pretty good,

Patrick: Marvelous. So, we're doing an interview for Art and Eros magazine about your art and your artistry and your philosophy as an artist. And what you see in your future as an artist. The first thing I'd like to ask you is your philosophy about your pastels. How you enjoy doing art with pastels, and what it is you enjoy most about pastel art, maybe two or three things about pastels?

Michelle: Well, I love that there is such a variety of color. There is something so satisfying about being able to blend the colors together. It

feels like I'm really doing art. And every piece of artwork that I do, I have put my fingerprint on it, and touches it. This is a part of my expression.

Patrick: You enjoy the chalk pastels, not the oil pastels, is that because of the texture.

Michelle: I like both. I don't have any preference.

Patrick: And you had showed me a remarkable box of pastels that you've been doing art with pastels, since you were very, very young. I believe it was when you were six years old. Tell me about that box of pastels. Tell me about what it means to you today. As you open it up, and you use the colors from the past.

Michelle: Oh, *Hahaha*. There's not a lot left because it's pretty used, but it was actually I think my older cousin. And then she had it handed to my sister and my sister handed it down to me. And it's really beautiful how something as simple as just a box of pastel could be enjoyed by so many people and all of us did different things with it.

Patrick: And tell me about some of the works of art you've done with this very special box of pastels. What are some of the things or art pieces you have done with them going back to the earliest time that you can remember?

Michelle: One in particular that I'm remembering was, I drew an underwater scene. And there were like, fish, and seaweed and sand, using colors like the blues and the greens and brown, yellow, yellowy brown. And that was really fun.

Patrick: Do you remember how old you were when you did that piece?

Michelle: Well, I would have just moved to Canada. When I was perhaps eleven.

Patrick: Today, when you do pastels, what do you like to do, what are the things that inspire you when you work with your pastels? And a few minutes. And I will ask you about the other forms of art you do. But I thought it would be nice to ask you about your past.

Michelle: Oh, I kind of draw whatever's on my mind. But I really like to draw different types of flower. There's something so satisfying to see the petals falling and opens up and opening up to the world.

Patrick: Your flowers are superb.

Michelle: thank you.

Patrick: Your flowers are really remarkable. I can see the texturing that you do on the petals. And you did recently a sunflower motif with a picture which will be in the magazine and I thought that was just marvelous. And then you did one of me sitting amongst flowers here. And when I saw that my heart just skipped about five beats, it's so beautiful. It's now framed here and it will hang in the Atelier. But I can see, your choice of colors also is refined as well. It's not just representational, but it has an emotional side to things. Tell me about your color theory.

Michelle: Well, I think I first just start thinking about what is the feeling that I want to express and I used [the theme of] color to express those feelings. Sometimes it would be just whatever the flower color would normally be. Sometime, it's more about the vision I wanted to creates and making that contrast and different appearance. So, for example, in the drawing with you and the chameleon, and the carnation I used more kind of reddish skin tone color primarily with some leaves that are green. And I think you kind of blend well within the flowers.

Patrick: Soft ... nice ... This work of art belongs to the gallery, it is so wonderful. And when I saw it, like I said, my heart skipped five beats, which in this case was a good thing. It's a beautiful work of art. And I can see your emotional center to the art that you do. You've done some portraiture, you

done some flowers. In the last [while], you've done some figuratives, you do love bright colors, I can see if it is that a reflection of your inner spirituality or in your character, bright colors?

Michelle: I think I just like having some cheery things around my life. I think... you know... having a piece of art; art that's dark; kind of brings the viewer down. And I think art is meant to be display. And if I'm displaying [it, then] I want the person to feel happy when they see it.

Patrick: So your philosophy as an artist includes the important notion that art should be uplifting.

Michelle: Yes ... I think so. But I also find arts is more about how it helps me with how I feel. When I use bright colors. It kind of reminds me to be bright, colorful, cheerful.

Patrick: Oh, that's marvelous. Tell me about some other art you'd like to do. What are do you like to do? Like photography? Do you like sketching? Do you like painting Do you like sculpture?

Michelle: I really like doing painting, especially landscape. Lately, I've been trying to learn more portrait and figurative drawing with pencil and graphite and other interesting medium. I also really like woodworking.

Patrick: You do silver as well. You do jewelry, don't you as well?

Michelle: Yeah, yeah.

Patrick: So you started doing pastels when you were very young. When did you start to do some of these other forms of art? Was it in school or was it what inspired you for instance to do the silver jewelry?

Michelle: Okay, well, um, what inspired me to do silver jewelry was actually a pretty simple reason; because I want to have a silver ring but my fingers are really narrow and I couldn't buy any. So I'm like, "I want to make my own." That's kind of how it started.

Patrick: Yeah, that's a marvelous reason. Some marvelous reason. And the woodworking, you like to build things right? Like carpentry and things like that.

Michelle: I think it's satisfying to surround yourself with things that you, you know, put your heart and soul into it. It's going to work for you. I've nothing against mass produced things, but there's just something really fun about having things that you made in your house and you know exactly how

you've made it. And if it breaks, you know how to fix it, because you created it.

Patrick: So this is an artistic philosopher. You are, to some extent an artisan. You like to make your own things and you'd like to be artistic while you're doing.

Michelle: Yes.

Patrick: I thought it was rather cute that you have a small car and one of the things you struggle with is trying to put some of your carpentry things into your small car.

Michelle: Yeah, there's always never enough room in my little car ...

Patrick: Oh my, oh my! You are a very spiritual person do you see some of your spiritualism in the art that you do. It's uplifting but do you see something beyond the uplifting? Do you see some particular meaning I know you have done portraiture recently of someone who's significant in your life, and there's a memory of her ...

Michelle: I think being a follower of Christ, I recognize that my artistic ability is a gift that God gave me and is a gift that I like to share with the world. I don't think my art have any particular religious association. But I do think that I am left with this gift and I'm grateful for it.

Patrick: Well, one of the things I noticed early on is the fact that it is uplifting your art. There's no darkness to it. It's light. It's happy. It's joyful. It's colorful. And I admire that.

So we talked about the fact that you have a favorite artist, Gustav Klimt. You have actually had a chance to go and visit Vienna and see his artwork in person. Yeah. So, share with us a bit of what you think about Klimt and what you think about his art and how it has affected you and inspired you ...

Michelle: Okay. Well, one thing I really liked about Klimt's art is that he's not afraid to paint over something that people will see as very valuable, like he paint over gold and it's very brave of him to do that. And he put efforts into every painting that he did, and that he has this very ingenious counterculture way of approaching art and it is very different and very much of reflection of this character. I think I also appreciate that he's not going to confine to what people think are the norms of the time. I also find that the fact that he portrays women in such a majestic way, it's really refreshing

Patrick: You have a favorite Klimt painting and a frieze ...

Michelle: I really like the Beethoven frieze, but I think I also really like The Kiss. I think both pieces of art it has capture something so different. The Beethoven frieze is capturing all the emotional rise and fall of the music. And when you look at it, you could almost hear it in your head, or at least in my head.

And then when I look at The Kiss, I really like how he portrayed the tenderness and the love between the two subjects. And I thought that the clothes, looking down in the gold and the pattern is showing how important and royal love is ... something that should be honored and is precious.

Patrick: Oh, my heart is aflutter. What do you see in the future? Do you have plans? Like for instance, in the next few months, the next few years? About your art what you do plan to explore certain themes do you plan to evolve some of your artistic ideas? What do you see in the future?

Michelle: Well, currently, I'm working on a piece of sculpture. And that's going to take me the next couple of months. But what about my artistic vision for the future? I think. I mean, I hope I will continue to do art that are uplifting and bright and colorful. Oh, and I think because everyone's art is a reflection of what they're thinking inside. And I can only hope that both my art and my life, will be uplifting and I live a colorful life.

Patrick: Oh, Michelle, you have a very warm heart, very uplifting character. And I can see that in your art. And I can see that in your philosophy. Is there any advice you would give someone who's starting out in art?

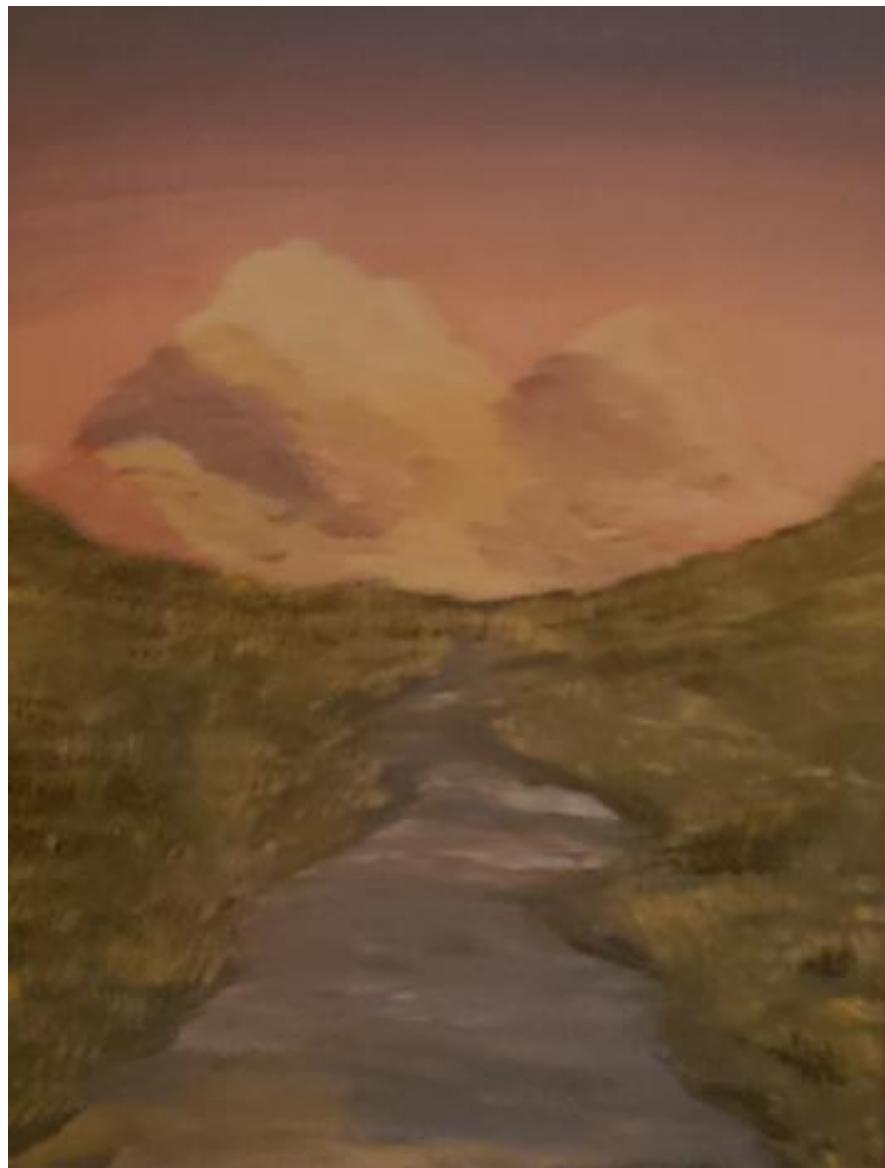
Michelle: Don't be afraid to just grab a pencil and paper and start drawing! Even if you think you're a horrible artist. Just start drawing and you're going to get better.

Patrick: Well, thank you very much for sitting for this interview. I admire your artistry, the softness of your pastels, the theme and also the presentation in the colors I think are most superb. Your colors remind me of the French Impressionists sense of color, where the color defines not just the balance of things but also defines the focus, the presence, the meaning of things. I think that your sense of proportion is marvelous. Your sense of balance is marvelous. Your sense of colors marvelous. Your sense of foreground and background is marvelous. And your sense of the main figure in your art, I think is so superior. It shows to me sophistication in your appreciation, and practices and artists. Thank you Michelle.

Michelle: Thank you

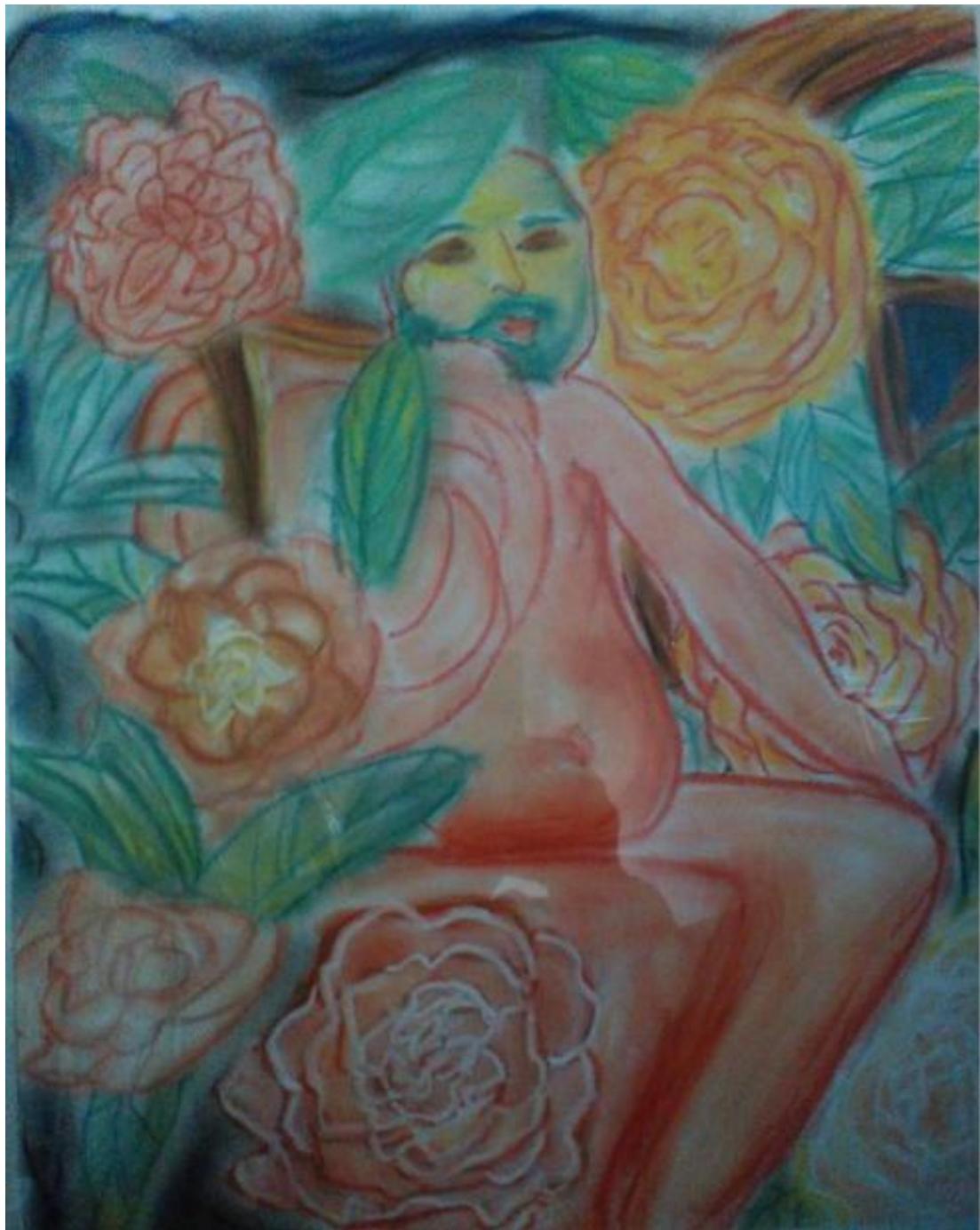
Art Work by Michelle











New Prose

The Romantic Poetry of Dorothy Parker by William Webster

[New York] Dorothy Parker, the 20th century American writer, is best known for her short stories and novels, as well as some of the theater and screen plays she wrote or coauthored. Her poetry was less known during the peak of her popularity in the 1940's and 1950's. Her poetic is in the sad romantic style.

A fine example of her simple romantic style is *A Very Short Song*

Once, when I was young and true.

Someone left me sad—

Broke my brittle heart in two;

And that is very bad.

Love is for unlucky folk.

Love is but a curse.

Once there was a heart I broke;

And that, I think, is worse.

In this edition we shall share some of Dorothy Parker's earlier poems.

In subsequent editions of Poetic Voice Magazine we shall serialized an anthology of her poetry.

Le Taureau by Patrick Bruskiewich

It was the seventh year of my schooling when I was drawn into the first epic battle I ever fought. It was also the year that my classmates chose me as their David and pitted me against our common Goliath.

Pre-pubescent, I was a thin wisp of a boy. My voice hadn't dropped, nor had other things. Goliath, on the other hand, was a bull of a boy whose nickname *Le Taureau* rhymed with his surname. In English *Le Taureau* means *the Bull*.

I was a half year younger than my class mates while he had been held back two grades and was three years older than everyone else. He was a good head taller and twice as massive as any boy in my class. There was one girl in our class who was as tall as *Le Taureau*. Emily was a nemesis of sorts to Goliath. She had matured early and being a dancer, was also a good athlete. Being sixteen, and unrelenting, he caused many problems with the girls in our class. He didn't care about school and had few friends. On the weekends he was the man around town. He smoked and swore and drank, chased skirts and gave everyone a bad time, even the nuns at our school. Everyone at our school was scared of him, expect me. It was easy for me to steer clear of his bullying because we existed in different worlds, and I had a 'live and let live' attitude.

Me, I was anything but an athlete. My nose always in a book. Maybe it was because I was not scared of *Le Taureau* that my classmate chose me as their

champion. Or maybe it was because, I knew in a battle between brains and brawn, brains will always prevail. Emily was smart too and so we sort of drifted together as friends. I would help her with her math and she helped me with my French homework.

How did the epic battle come about? Every spring our school had a track and field competition. Our school was an elementary school that went to grade seven. For the past few years because *Le Taureau* was older and more massive than the rest of us boys he had dominated the events. No one could throw a shot-put half the distance as him, nor run as fast, nor jump as far. There was just one event where he could barely hold his own: high jump. Sure he was strong, but his strength came at a price, for bulls are hard to lift high off the ground. It was funny how when someone came close to beating him at high jump that they would suddenly start to ‘fall off’ in their jumps, or twist an ankle or be hurt in some other way.

What set off the epic battle was that Emily could jump as high as *Le Taureau*. which enraged him at being challenged by a girl, and by a girl who pushed away his amorous advances.

Me ... I was getting into the science of kinematics, dynamics and projectile motion. I was a nerd! Sure sometimes I helped the girls in my class with their math, but I lived in my own universe. . What do the Japanese say about being too much of an individual: ‘*if you are a nail sticking out of a board expect to be pounded down.*’

As it happened the man in charge of our school's track and field program was the Principal of our school, Mr. Kloster, and well he had this own fervent theology that '*no student should live in a universe of their own.*' Mr. Kloster was definitely old school, having served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Army and having landed on Juno beach on D-day and, well, you get the rest of the picture with him. He wasn't a bad egg, just a firm disciplinarian.

Mr. Kloster was adamant that all his students needed to participate in school activities, particularly in our track and field competition, especially nerds like me. "It will build character ..." was his mantra. Like Uncle Sam in a wartime recruitment poster he pointed his finger at me and proclaimed "it will build your character!" He was the master at the carrot and the stick pedagogy. "If you don't compete," he sternly warned me, "I will take away your library privileges!" You could not hide from him and it was hard not to come down with a chronic case of Klosterphobia.

But what if you don't want character? Or what if the character you do want is to be good at the science of kinematics, dynamics and projectile motion? Believe me, I had no choice in the matter. I had to participate and well, even today, four and a half decades later I don't know if it was Mr. Kloster, or perhaps someone else who decided I was to become the champion of high jumping. But there you have it, the beginning of an epic battle. An epic battle between brain and brawn. An epic battle to save Emily from the Minotaur.

Almost immediately *Le Taureau* had his horns in us! Maybe he knew it in his bones that his brawn would not prevail. Maybe it was just the thought that little David would challenge him. Maybe it was because Emily liked me? Or maybe it was because what he did to Emily. She was a very sensitive and artistic person who loved classical music and danced ballet. He went out of his way to bully her and demean her and make every day at school her own private hell. That was truly monstrous!

One Monday afternoon Emily took me by the hand into the gym and locked the doors behind us. Then she started to remove her dress! I stood agog until I realized under her outfit was her gym gear, a close fitting black outfit that was very much like a one piece bathing suit. I stood transfixed by both the broad and the subtle curves of her. I snapped out of my trance when she pointed to the far corner of our gym where the high jump bars had been set, as well as the landing bag.

She did not say a word but slipped out of her school shoes and scurried bare foot over to the high jump bars. I watched from a distance as she did a few warm up stretches and then set the bar at around 1 meter and did her first jump. It was indescribably beautiful to watch her as she rushed the bar and jumped. Emily easily and cleanly cleared the bar. Before she stood up from the landing bag she beckoned me over. I knew something special was afoot ... I had apprehensions, but nonetheless, and with some reluctance, I meandered over to join her.

As I stood over her, Emily was leaning back on her hands. Her pose accentuated her remarkable form. It is hard to describe my feelings at that moment for here we were alone the two of us in a moment of pure intimacy. Emily looked up at me with her tender and sensitive eyes. "I want to teach you how to high jump." I smiled. I had not expect her to ask this. Instead I had expected her to ask me to help her get ready for Friday. Our school track-and-field competition with slated for this Friday.

In my love sick state all I could do was nod. I helped her up and could not tell whether it was my hand or hers that burned with emotion. I went into the boy's change room, found my locker and put on my gym gear. As I put on my gear it was hard for me to hide how our intimacy was affecting me. I was embarrassed. But bravely, I stepped back into the gym. I went back to join Emily at the bar. She tried not to notice, but I knew she had. I dropped my hands in front of myself and watched Emily as she jumped. By now she had raised the bar to one meter twenty and again was clearing it gracefully.

Then it was my turn. Awkwardly, not really knowing what I was doing, I threw myself at the bar. I knocked the bar clear across the gym. So down it went to one meter and so began my instruction. She started me on the scissors, an approach that had its limitations. After two or three successes she raised the bar in increments of 5 centimeters until I could not clear it. On the last try, at one meter fifteen I nearly bent the bar when I fell astraddle it. It would have hurt me more but I was leaning back at the time and so I took the full force on my backside and not elsewhere.

“That must hurt!” Emily exclaimed as I lay there stunned on the landing bag. I nodded and tried to give her my bravest smile. It was then that I looked past her at the clock on the wall. “Oh my god!” I exclaimed. She perhaps thought it was the pain that got me so worked up. It was now nearly five and I had a bus to catch and so I lifted myself off the bag and said “I must go.”

“Will you come back tomorrow?” she asked. Her eyes pleaded with me. She was such a beauty. How could I say no! And so I nodded, feeling my face grow warm and then dashed away.

In the change room I could barely bend over to put my pants on and wondered how I was going to manage the wretched bus ride home with a sore backside. But, the bus ride home passed pleasantly as I thought of Emily. It was when I realized the solemn reasons why Emily had chosen me as her champion that my pain transformed itself into a burning pleasure. I was not scared of Goliath. I was more worried that I might let Emily down!

I had a fitful night, partly because of my painful backside and partly because my nerves were on edge. The following morning at school I must have looked a frightful sight for Emily turned to me half way through English class and passed me a note! She had never before passed anyone a note and so my classmates now knew something was up between us. And no one had ever before passed me a note. The nun caught the motion out of the corner of her eye but since it was a transaction between her two best students, she gave us a pass.

All the note said was “Are you ok?” And to answer her I smiled and nodded, but in the rough and ready minds of my classmates they figured we had passed a love note. *Le Taureau* glared at the two of us for the rest of the class. When the bell rang he tried to block my way out of the classroom door. The nun saw what was happening and called him off. “You haven’t handed in your homework … again. What am I to do with you?” It was now lunchtime and would you believe it the teacher kept the bull busy writing his homework essay over lunch. Yes, there was a game being played out this week!

Emily and I met in another intimate rendezvous of high jumping. She jumped a few times but I could tell she was not in peak form. So she spent most of the time helping me with my jumping technique. Yes, my back was very painful but I could not bring myself to let her down and so I jumped over and over and over again, as she moved the bar slowly up.

This time she taught me a new technique that was a variation of the scissors. “You sort of found it out yourself yesterday, lean back as you jump.” After about an hour she had me jumping at a glorious height of one meter twenty! I only hurt myself once that afternoon. I fell with the bar across my shoulder. But it was Tuesday and the clock was ticking. “Can you stay later tomorrow after school?” she queried. “My mother can drive you home.” It was a bargain I could not turn down.

My backside was still sore from Monday, and now my shoulder too, but today's remarkable achievement took away all the residual pain. The bus ride home took longer than usual and so I was late for dinner. "Why are you so late?" I told my mother that I was training for track and field. She of course did not believe me. Her son '*the intellectual*' doing athletics! "Whatever you are up to," she said, "don't be late for dinner tomorrow!"

Thanks mom, was all I could think. My mother never believed me when I told her the truth! The angst of this made me wonder whether I had been set as a babe in a basket before their front door, like Moses in the reeds, instead of being the fruit of her womb ... to use Catholic parlance.

Wednesday at school passed slowly. *Le Taureau* knew with certainty that something was up and took to harassing Emily. I guessed he looked at me the same way that Goliath appraised David and thought '... yah... sure!' Emily bravely took everything in stride. It was later that afternoon when Mr. Kloster showed up in our classroom to snag *Le Taureau* just before the final bell. "Come with me ..." he pointed solemnly at the bull, "we have some serious business to discuss in my office!"

And so, once again, Emily and I were free and easy to make our dash to the gym. We had only two days left to prepare for Friday. That afternoon I was the one jumping solo. "You're not jumping today?"

"I can't," Emily replied.

“Did you hurt yourself?” I asked anxiously.

“Heavens no!” she exclaimed “... it’s just that ...” she paused. She looked down. “You don’t know much about girls do you?”

“I have two sisters ...” I blindly replied.

“Both younger than you!”

I nodded.

“Well ... once every few weeks women have to stop being so active ...”

“Oh ... I see,” I said. But actually I didn’t. I caught the nuance but did not really understand it. No one had taught me about the birds and the bees, after all I was a student at a Catholic school, and well they just didn’t teach us such things. They expected our parents to tell us the facts of life. Fat chance from my parents!

So that afternoon I jumped, solo, and got to the limit of my technique at one meter thirty two. Then Emily did something unexpected. “Let me teach you a third way to jump.”

“A third way?” I was surprised. And so she did teach me a way I had never seen before, but not by first jumping for me, because she wasn’t up to it. To teach me she had me run and dive into her arms. I was skeptical to begin

with but after two or three runs I had full confidence in her. She was agile and stronger than I imagined. “How come you can do this ... catch me like this as I jump?”

“When we dance ballet we don’t have any boys in our class and so we take turns with the lifts.” She paused for a moment then smirked. “I bet you can lift me!”

Before I could say no she made a run at me and although I tried my best, my best was not good enough and we fell in a tumble. My elbow hit the wood with a loud thud! I don’t know why they call it a ‘funny bone’ for striking it is hardly funny, but now I had a sore backside, a sore shoulder and a painfully sore elbow.

“Oh ... I guess I shouldn’t have done that.” There she was lying on top of me, her body pressed close up against mine, her breath against my cheek. Before I could summon up enough courage to kiss her, Emily had already started to disentangle herself from me and stand. I just lay there on the floor for a second trying to make sense of my befuddled emotions. I wondered if this was what love felt like.

I rubbed my painful elbow. She offered me her hand and helped me off the floor. “I hope I haven’t broken your arm.” Emily tenderly studied my arm, moving it back and forth. “It doesn’t appear broken.”

My pain and pleasure was mixed in the most sublime way. I would be brave and jump some more. And so she did catching me and carrying me and showing me how to lift myself and roll face first over the bar. By the end of that afternoon we were both in a sweat and I was up to one meter forty two!

The drive home was majestic with Emily and I in the back seat of their big Buick and her mother chauffeuring me home. Emily placed her hand on mine as we sat silently in the twenty minute drive across town. I looked down at her fingers and for the first time noticed that her finger nails were perfect and were painted a soft feminine, pink.

I guess it is maternal intuition that saw to it that my mother was at our front window just as I was deposited in front of my home. When I told her once again I was training for our track and field event my mother believed me and piled more food on my plate that evening ... “to give me strength!”

That night, despite the throbbing of my backside, my shoulder, my elbow and another place, I slept like a baby. Although my backside was sore, that night I had to sleep on my back! That night I also thought about the physics of what I was doing and the motion of my body and its appendages. I realized that I was an organic machine, made of organic materials and sorted out how I might optimize my high jumping by moving my arms and legs. My studying of kinematics and dynamics would be put to the test. Around midnight I finally fell asleep thinking I could jump as high as my chin!

The next day at school *Le Taureau* was nowhere to be seen. It was Thursday and rumors abound about his fate until after lunch when Mr. Kloster came over the intercom to announce that *Le Taureau* “had been suspended for a day for talking back to one of the nuns in our school ...” There was a loud cheer in the hallway that only died off when Mr. Kloster delivered the second half of his message “...he will be back tomorrow for the competition.” The air cooled by a good five degrees as he said this.

For some reason at the end of this very same announcement Mr. Kloster summoned both Emily and I to his office over the intercom. I thought we were both in some sort of trouble, but in fact it was so that he could inform us we had the afternoon off to practice and that we had the whole gym to ourselves. Sternly Mr. Kloster pronounced “good luck ... *Le Taureau*’s record is one meter sixty ... the whole school is watching!”

With his announcement, by now the game being played was the worst kept secret in the school. But would *Le Taureau* catch wind of it? Thanks I thought, I needed for the whole school to be brought into this game.

Things were only made worst when he be told me *Le Taureau*’s record. Lieutenant Kloster, formerly of the Royal Canadian Army, was issuing me an order ... I was to jump higher than the bull! This instance was the only time I wanted to run and hide in this epic fight with Goliath. But as he issued me his order Emily grabbed my hand and gave it a squeeze which took the sting off his stern pronouncement.

From that moment onwards I didn't care what the rest of the school thought, I only cared that I was in this for Emily. And so that afternoon in the gym she coaxed me on and I jumped ... and missed ... and jumped and missed ... and jumped and cleared until I could over the bar at just a shade past one meter fifty two. I was still eight centimeters short!

I was exhausted as they drove me home. Emily was beaming as she did not take her eyes off of me. I could see her mother eye us in the rear view mirror. We weren't really doing anything but I felt guilty. I also had to cross my legs.

That night I went straight to bed after dinner.

Friday was a windy and stormy day. Classes were cancelled that day and as the whole school was to turn out for our track and field competition. Emily kept me sequestered and practicing in the gym so that I could jump higher, and higher and higher clearly and cleanly. We took a break for lunch and a short nap on the landing bag. Emily and I facing each other from opposite sides. I tried to close my eyes but just couldn't. I admired her as Emily slept for twenty minutes and when she awoke we went back to my jumping.

By three in the afternoon I was clearing one meter fifty eight. But I was still two centimeters short of *Le Taureau* record! I was at the end of my tether. There wasn't anything else I could do to jump an iota higher.

At that moment the exterior door to the gym swung open and there was Mr. Kloster, the warden beckoning a condemned man to his fate. “It is time,” he said solemnly. “Are you ready?”

My heart was in my throat.

It was Emily who said “I think so!”

“How high,” Mr. Kloster inquired.

“One meter fifty eight,” Emily answered. She grabbed my hand and pulled me through the door. Mr. Kloster held the door for us as we both walked out into the afternoon breeze. There, I swear, were four hundred pairs of eyes staring at us, three hundred and ninety nine pairs in abject approval and one pair of eyes boring into both Emily and I with abject hatred.

I don’t know if it was the sudden change in air temperature, or the wind or *Le Taureau’s* anger that set a chill down my spine but blindly I followed Emily as she led me across the field to the high jump circle. I smirked when I realized that Mr. Kloster had made arrangement for our high jump equipment to be left in the gym for Emily and I to use. We stood about as it was carried from the gym into the playing field and set up. It was only then that I realized that the last competition of the day was to be the high jump!

Emily and I were some distance away from *Le Taureau* but we could see he was sweating and breathing heavily. He had spent the entire day competing

on many of the other track and field events. Across his chest were two rows of first place ribbons. Behind and off to the side from *Le Taureau* stood two men, one of which I recognized as the Superintendent of our school, and the other man that appeared strangely out of place.

The principal set up the high jump bar on the part of the field that had a slight slope. I thought nothing of it for I would be approaching the bar from the higher point towards the lower point. The bar was set square to the pylons with a few centimeter difference between high and low.

At that moment I realized that this was the track and field event of the day for there would only be two competitors, David and Goliath. I took a step back in apprehension, but behind me firmly stood Emily. She whispered into my ear “I have faith in you! We all do.” I felt her hand on the small of my back.

“We will begin at one meter fifty eight,” Mr. Kloster announced. There was a universal gasp. I gulped. *Le Taureau* glared at me with a menacing grim.

“Who will go first?” Mr. Kloster asked.

I needed a moment to gather my courage and so I motioned for him to go first. And so he went first, from the low side of the slope and, well he flopped over the bar and nudged it with his elbow. Both he and the bar fell into the landing bag.

“FAULT!” Mr. Kloster declared.

It was now my turn. The fact that the bull had missed gave me a jolt of adrenaline. I felt a kiss on my cheek and turned to see Emily’s face pressed close to mine. “I know you will clear it . . .” she said. I stared for a split second into her eyes and could feel the love she had for me.

I turned and took my time, bounding up and down on my legs like they were cocked springs. Her kiss had also caught me in other ways. I knew all I had to do was jump, clear the bar and quickly roll off the landing bag, for if the bar fell after I cleared the bag then all was fine.

One . . . two . . . three . . . firm bounding steps and up I flew through the air, rolling over and clearing the bar but nudging it with my nose. I flopped down onto the landing bag and rolled off just as a gust of wind caught the edge of the bar. It began to rattle. But by the time the wind had coaxed it off, I had rolled off the bag and was standing up with my arms up like a surrendering prisoner.

“CLEAR!” Mr. Kloster yelled,

Almost as if his breath was the deciding edge, another gust of wind caught the bar and it fell off the low side of the pylons.

“Wait a minute,” the bull yelled. “That’s not fair!”

It was then that the man next to the superintendent spoke for the first time.
“Clear! The wind is what pushed the bar over.”

Le Taureau glared at the strange man and went quiet.

Emily ran over to me and grabbed my arm and gave me another kiss, this time on the other cheek. “That was wonderful,” she said with breathless enthusiasm. I was stunned as she lead me away from the landing bag and off to the side.

The bar was set for *Le Taureau*’s second try. Once again he missed, this time falling with the bar under him. “Merde,” he bellowed falling full weight across the bar.

“Language!” Mr. Kloster yelled. “Watch you language!”

It was again my turn, but I shook my head. In this game I was prepared to stand at one meter fifty eight. I knew I could not do any better.

When it was time for a third and final try *Le Taureau* bellowed “One meter sixty,”

“No . . .” Mr. Kloster said, “not before you clear a meter fifty eight.” This decision was meant to anger the bull, which it did. *Le Taureau* swore a second time. The crowd gasped with horror. It was then that the strange man turned to the Superintendent and shook his hand “It is time for me to

go.” With a start *Le Taureau* turned to him, “don’t leave just yet. I haven’t cleared one sixty yet.”

But the strange man looked at his watch and said “I have seen what I have come to see.” *Le Taureau* pointed to the bar but the man firmly said “you are going to miss! You are meant to miss! There will be no records from you today.” Slowly and with a flourish the strange man tore an official looking piece of paper into four equal pieces and tossed them to the ground. Then he turned and walked away.

“Who is that man,” I whispered to Emily.

“Oh him …” she whispered back, “he is a track and field talent scout!” Now the game being played made sense!

As he watched the talent scout walk away *Le Taureau* was beside himself with anger. When a boy from the fifth grade laughed nervously, he turned and punched him squarely in the face, breaking the poor boy’s nose.

Sternly the Superintendent declared, “You are suspended for the remainder of the school year!”

Before *Le Taureau* could utter another word, Mr. Kloster grabbed him by one arm and the Superintendent grabbed another. Together the big burly men dragged *Le Taureau* kicking , screaming, and swearing from the school field. That was the last time anyone from our school ever saw him!

As this finale unfolded, Emily hugged me, squealing with happiness. Then together we dashed back into the gymnasium, for neither of us wanted to be mobbed by the ecstatic students who celebrated in a frenzy.

She followed me into the boy's change room and sat with me as I quickly changed out of my gym gear. I guess I should have turned my back or crossed my legs but I didn't mind. She blushed and turned away.

Emily and I were loving friends. We were out the door before anyone else intruded on our intimacy. And there was her mother waiting to pick us up.

It was epic. Sure I hadn't done it all by myself, but with one single jump up ... David had slew Goliath.

Catastrophic Floods More a Human Failure than Natural Disaster

By Daphne Bramham

VS, Dec. 7, 2021

As British Columbians have tragically learned in the past few weeks, catastrophic flooding isn't just too much rain falling too quickly. It's a confluence of factors, not least of which is human failure.

Long before climate change, people began massively changing landscapes and disrupting water flows with dikes, dams, diversions and development. In a mountainous province like this, there's little choice but to build in the valleys and river basins with the corollary that when that man-made infrastructure fails, it often fails spectacularly.

Dike failures have been the most obvious and fully avoidable cause of current flooding that has forced nearly 15,000 people to evacuate, put 7,400 others on evacuation alerts and resulted in the deaths of an estimated 628,000 chickens, 12,000 hogs, 420 dairy cows and bees in 110 hives.

"Dikes give us a false sense of security," Brent Ward, co-director of Simon Fraser University's Centre for Natural Hazards Research, said. "They're supposed to protect us. But they always fail."

Up until recently, the geology professor said, "Hard, engineering solutions were the way to go ... We thought we could control nature."

More than 200 dikes run for more than 1,100 kilometres. They're meant to protect 160,000 hectares of land, including some of the most valuable. In the Lower Mainland alone, there are 600 km of dikes, 400 flood boxes and 100 pump stations.

But worse than the masters-of-the-universe thinking is the fact that for years engineers have warned governments that the systems were on the brink of collapse or had already failed.

Most recently, the warning came from the Fraser Basin Council. In March, it concluded that most dikes don't meet provincial standards and predicted their failure during relatively weak storms, let alone three successive atmospheric rivers.

Six years earlier, the executive summary of the 2015 assessment of Lower Mainland dikes done for the B.C. government got straight to the point.

"The dikes generally do not meet current provincial standards and none fully meet or exceed the standards," it said. "Fifty-four per cent have crest profiles below design flood levels. Seventy-one per cent of the dikes could be expected to fail by overtopping."

And, just in case you were wondering what might happen in an earthquake, the engineers said none of them meet seismic standards over their entire length and 53 per cent are seismically unstable."

That 233 page report by Northwest Hydraulic Consultants and Thurber Engineering made an equally blunt and correct prediction. Nothing would likely be done about these deficiencies.

“Considering the high cost of land, raising the dikes may be prohibitively expensive, even in locations where upgrades are feasible from geotechnical and land-use perspectives … Adaptation to climate change impacts, such as increased peak flows and sea level rise, would require future, more significant upgrades.”

In addition to the recent failure of Fraser Valley dikes, the ones meant to protect Merritt from a one-in-200-year flood lasted only a few hours before the Coldwater River broke free. It rushed over the floodplain, swamped the sewage treatment system and charted a new course.

“I’ve never seen anything like it,” Ward said of the changes downstream from Merritt toward Spences Bridge. “There’s very little left of the road. The river got really wide and broad, and the erosive power of the river can cause it to laterally migrate.”

As the water recedes, he expects the river will settle into a new permanent channel. What does that mean for the roads, bridges, power lines, homes and everything else built along the old channel? Will they have to be relocated?

“That’s the \$64,000 question,” he said. “We still don’t know how climate change is evolving. People talk about a new normal, but it’s not normal yet. We still haven’t reached equilibrium so it’s hard to predict how big a culvert to put in, how much rip-rap is to stop the river from undercutting roads or even what the flows are going to be.”

The problem with dikes is that they leave swollen rivers with nowhere to go because almost invariably they have been built atop the river’s banks. Then, after the water does spill over, it gets trapped on the floodplain with no way to retreat.

What we have to start thinking about is that in some areas the dikes will have to be moved back, and houses and property will have to be bought out,” said Ward. “And I don’t know if we have the political will to do that.”

Those may be more like \$64 million or \$64 billion questions especially considering that even five years ago the Fraser Basin Council estimated 1 that damage alone caused by a one-in-200-year flood could be as much as \$30 billion.

As for the political will, maybe this flood has been the tipping point after years of governments ignoring the scientists and the engineers. When it has come to a choice of pay now or pay later, most cleaved to the electoral calendar, hoped for the best and continued underfunding construction, maintenance and repair of all manner of critical infrastructure.

All the while, they also continued to bow to development pressures, paving over aquifers and streams, and approving more and more construction of everything from airports to hospitals to high-density housing on floodplains.

For decades, the political calculus favoured all levels of government.

But, now in B.C., the bills are finally coming due.

A fine collection of Art Books

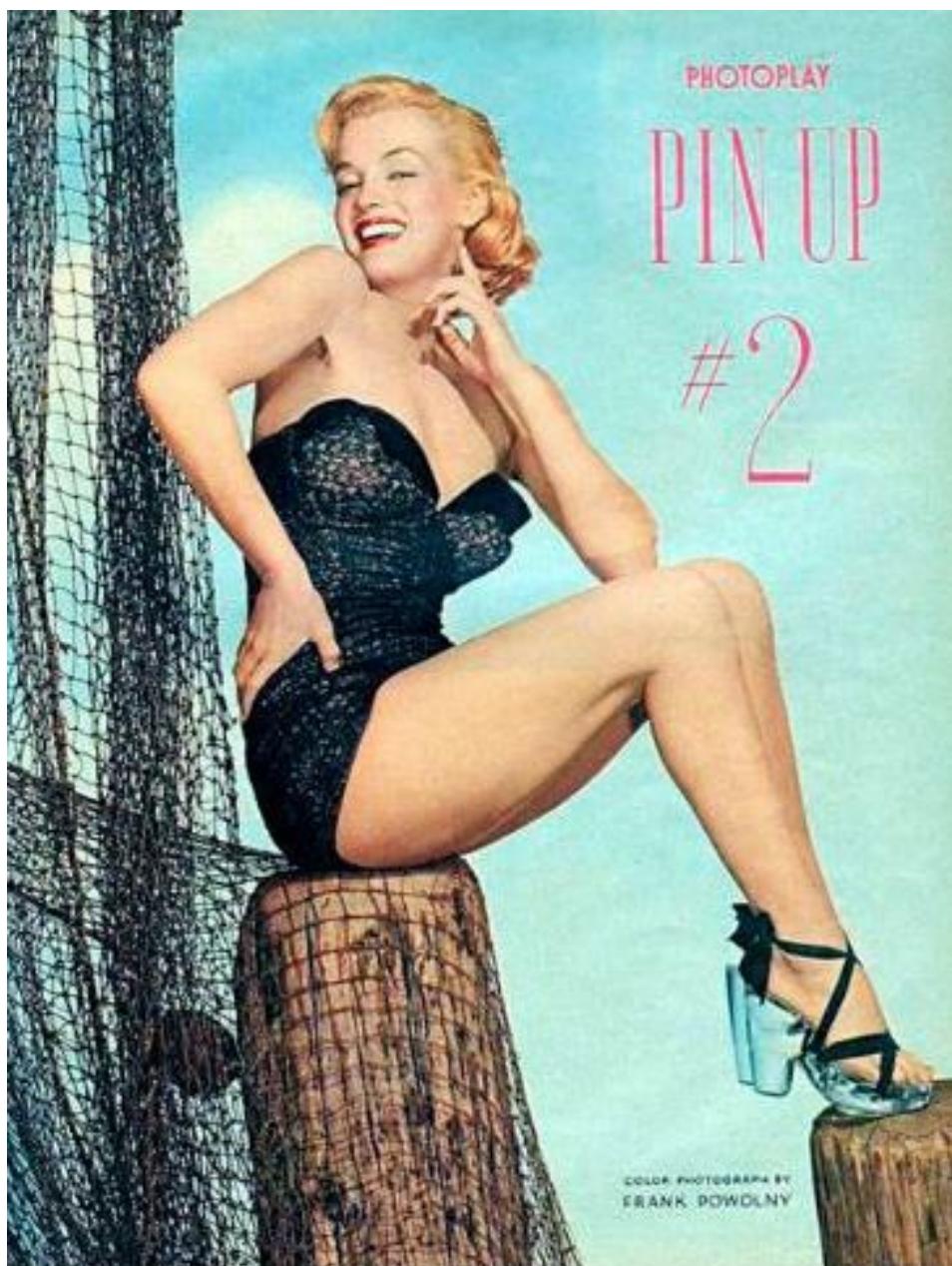


Atelier Press

A growing collection of titles available at Amazon

Editor in Chief: Patrick Bruskiewich

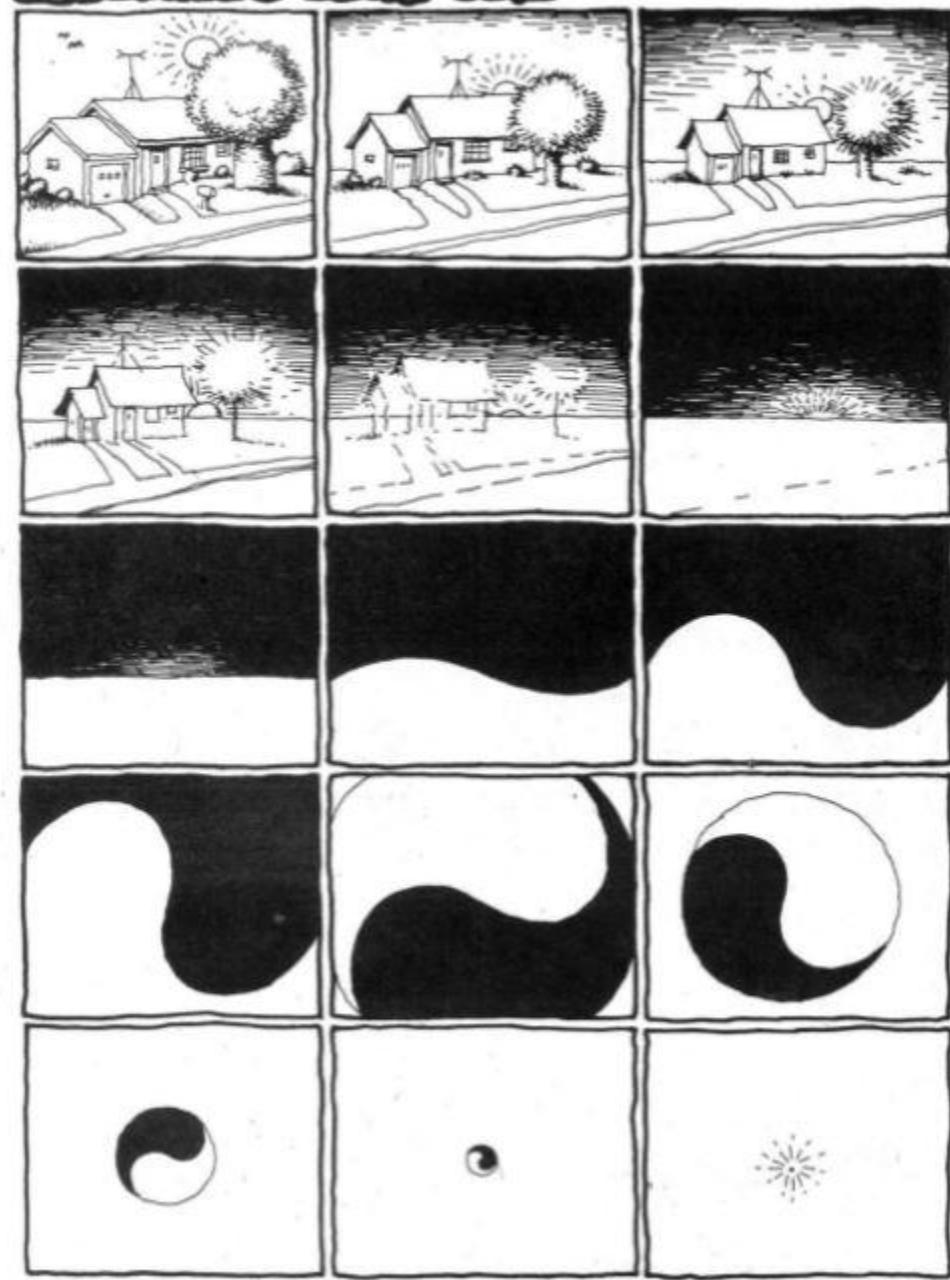
Guess Who? ... From 1949



Art Works from the Modern Era

Four Pieces of Comic Art by Robert Crumb

Kozmic Kapers



Art & Beauty MAGAZINE



SHE: Don't you think that Postmodernism is an inclusive aesthetic that cultivates the variety of incoherence?

HE : Hey, I love my wife but OH YOU KID!

"ALL MEN ARE IN SOME DEGREE IMPRESSED BY THE FACE OF THE WORLD; SOME MEN EVEN TO DELIGHT. THIS LOVE OF BEAUTY IS TASTE. OTHERS HAVE THE SAME LOVE IN SUCH EXCESS THAT, NOT CONTENT WITH ADMIRING, THEY SEEK TO EMBODY IT IN NEW FORMS. THE CREATION OF BEAUTY IS ART."

— RALPH WALDO EMERSON

"THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE ART THEIR BUSINESS ARE MOSTLY IMPOSTORS."

— PABLO PICASSO

"NO ARTIST OF ANY PERMANENT ACHIEVEMENT EVER THINKS OF MONEY ONE BIT MORE THAN IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY."

— N.C. WYETH



THE THREE GRACES — Copied from REGNAULT

WARMTH OF SOFTLY MOLDED CONTOURS IS ONE OF THE CHARMS
OF THIS EXQUISITE CLASSIC COMPOSITION OF NUDE FIGURES.



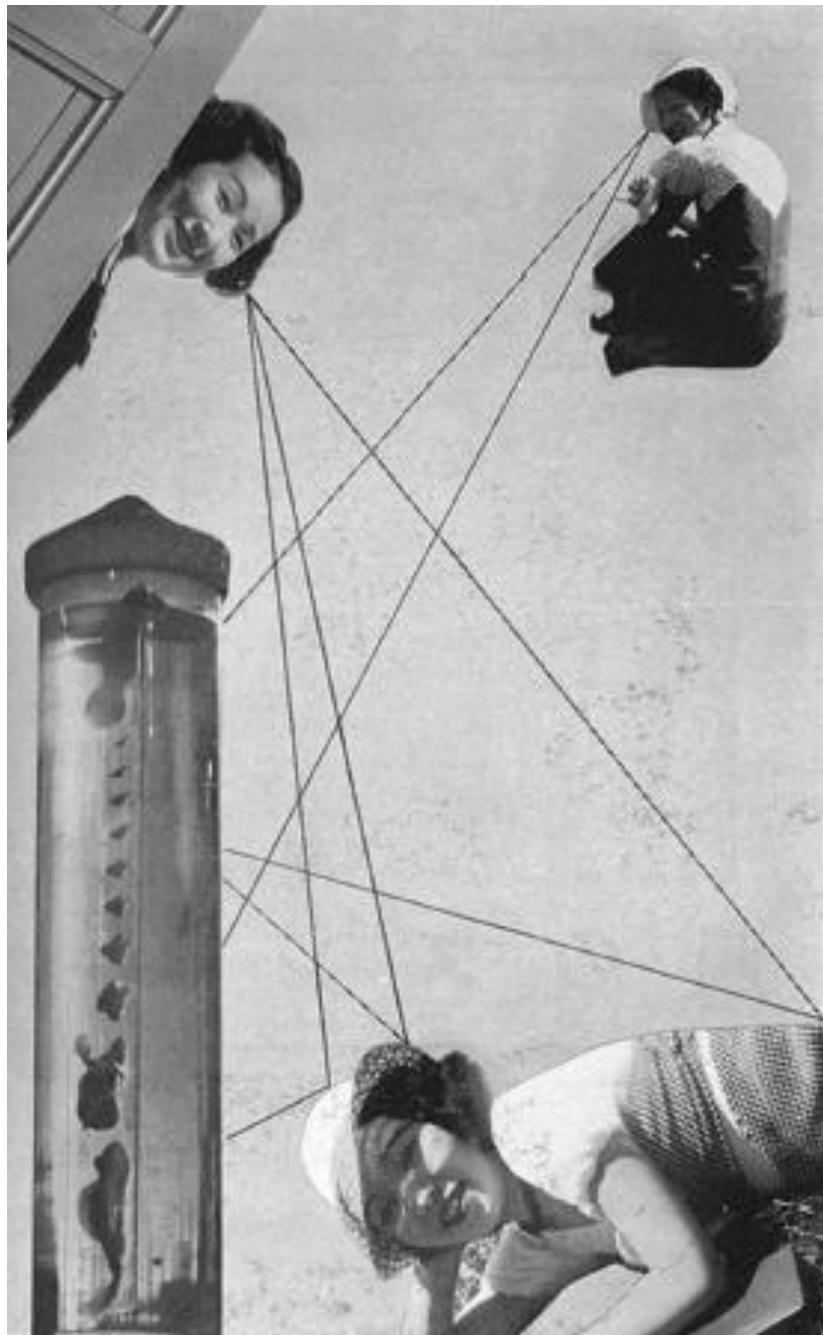
THERE IS CONSIDERABLE DRAMATIC FEELING IN THIS PICTURE—THE LIMBS ARE NOT POSED IN CONVENTIONAL OR EASY ATTITUDES—THE MODEL'S FIGURE POSSESSES SOARITY AND STRENGTH, WHILE HER FACE CERTAINLY DOES NOT LACK APPEAL.

"WHEN ONE FOLLOWS NATURE, ONE OBTAINS EVERYTHING."
— AUGUSTE RODIN

Le Surréalisme en Japon durant les 1930's



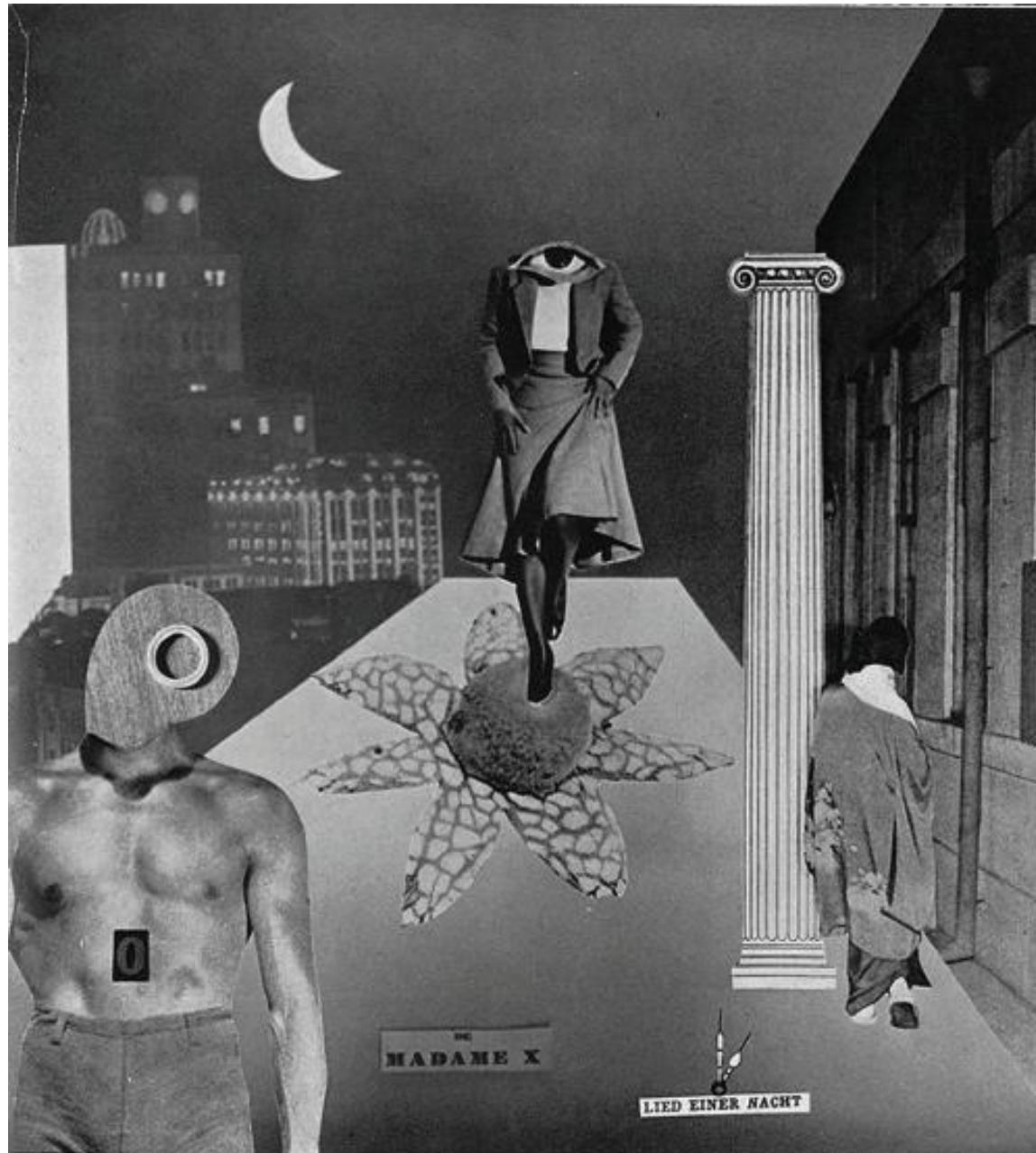
Asahi Journal of Photography, 1932



Koishi Kiyoshi, *Is There Something Funny?* Asahi Camera, 1934



Ei-Kyū, *The Reason for Sleep*, 1936



Matsubara Jūzō, Untitled Composition, 1935



Matusbara Jūzō, Untitled Composition 1936



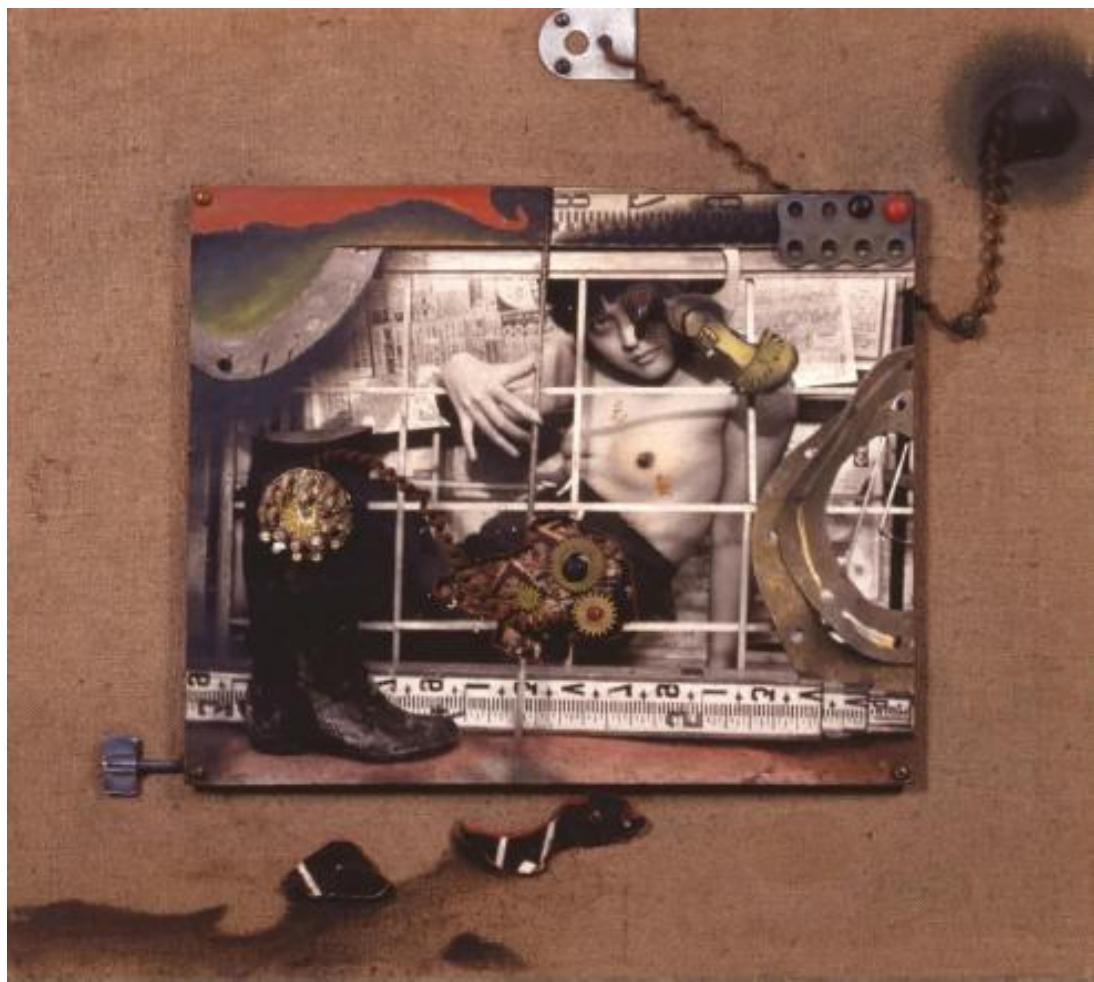
Matsubara Jūzō, Liberated Fantasy, 1937



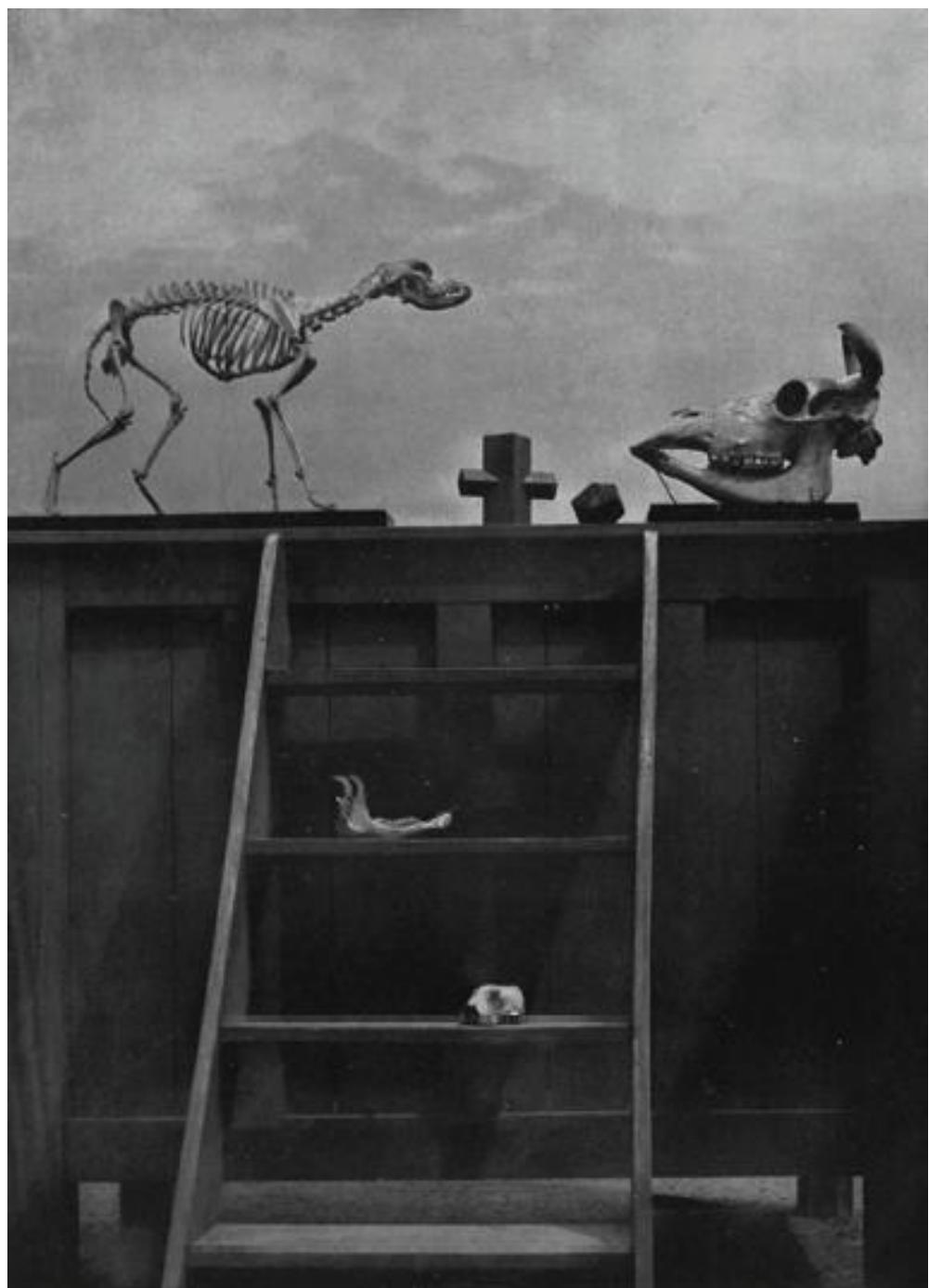
Yamanaka Chirū, Collage, Mizue No. 389a, 1937



Yamanaka Chirū, Collage, Mizue No. 389b, 1937



Hanawa Gingo, *Complex Imagination*, Collage and assemblage, 1938



Hirai Terushichi, Altar, 1938



Hirai Terushichi, Face, Hikari, 1940



Hanawa Gingo, 'Dream of Spring in Broad Daylight', 1938



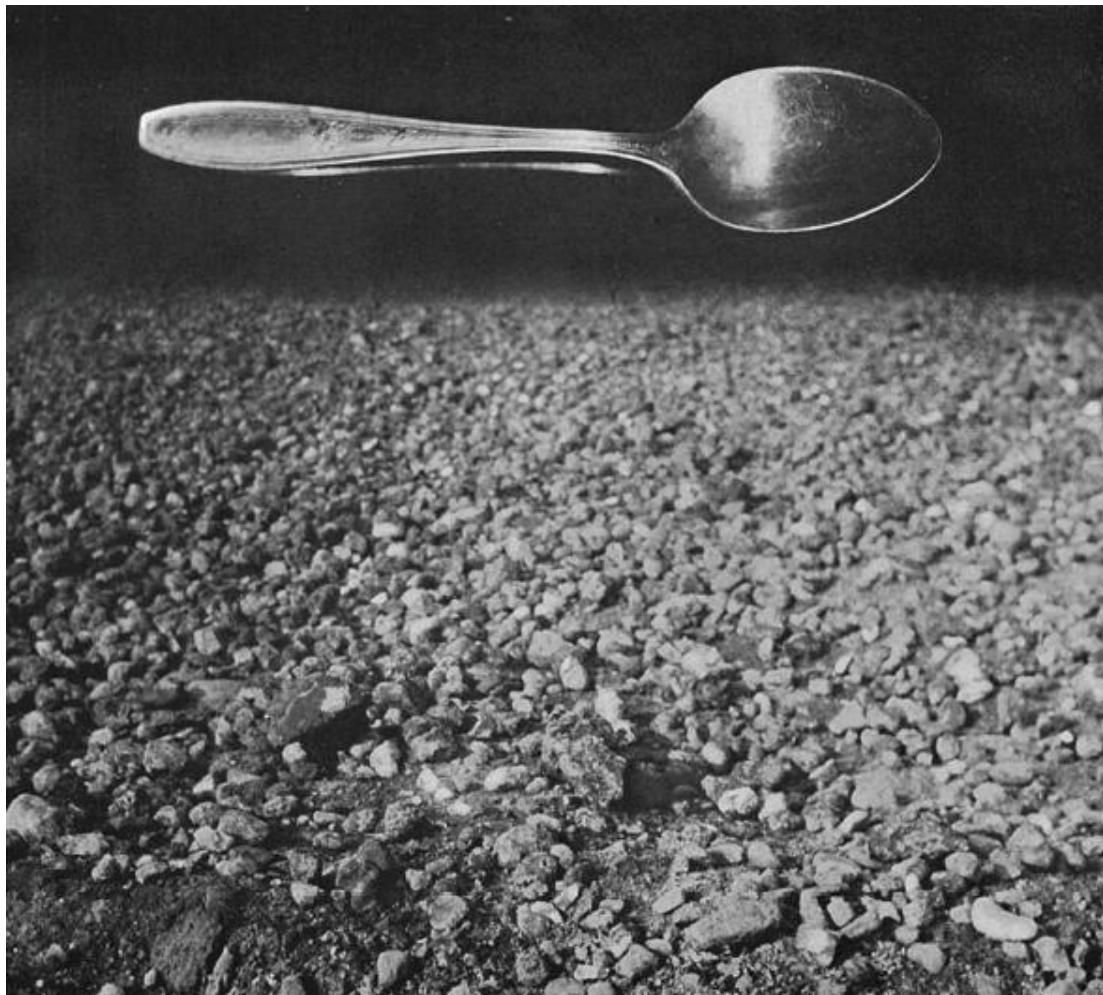
Ikemiya Seijirō, Shadow, 1938



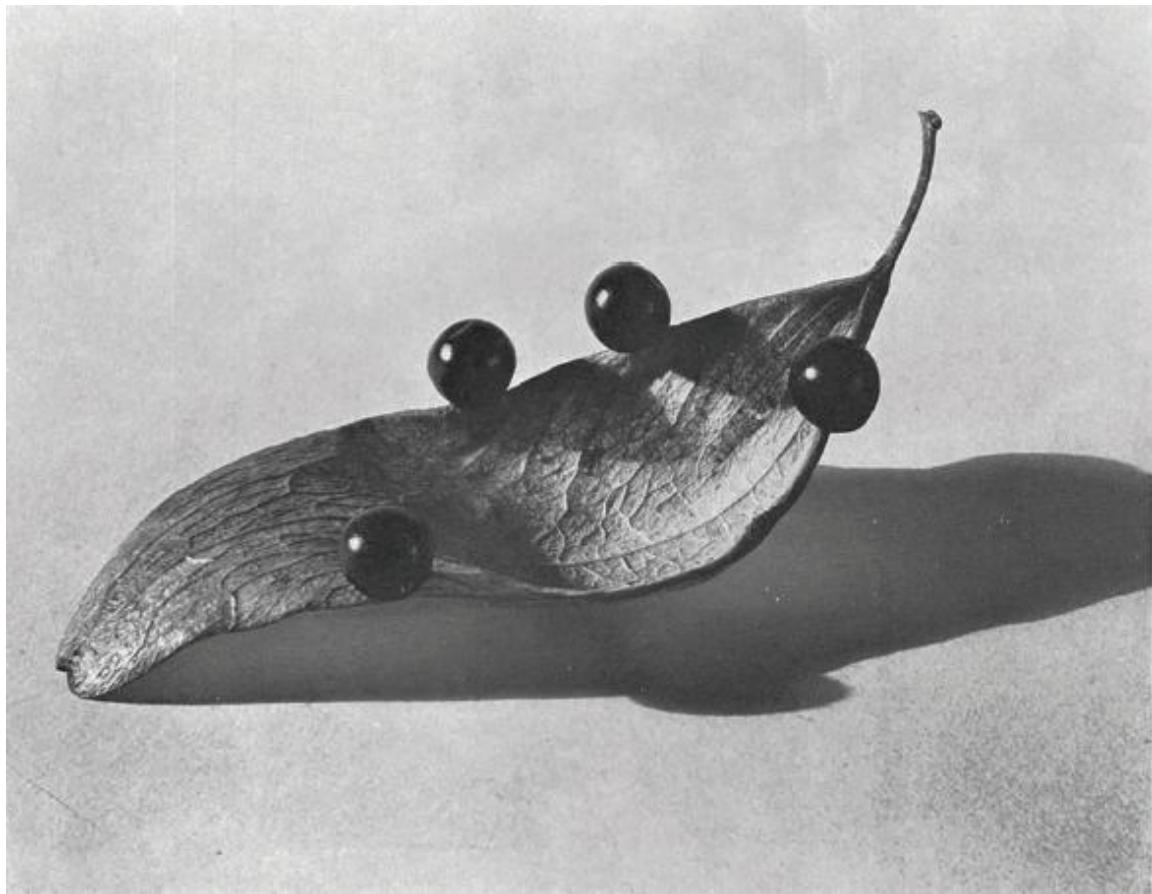
Shimozato Yoshio, Giving Birth, 1939



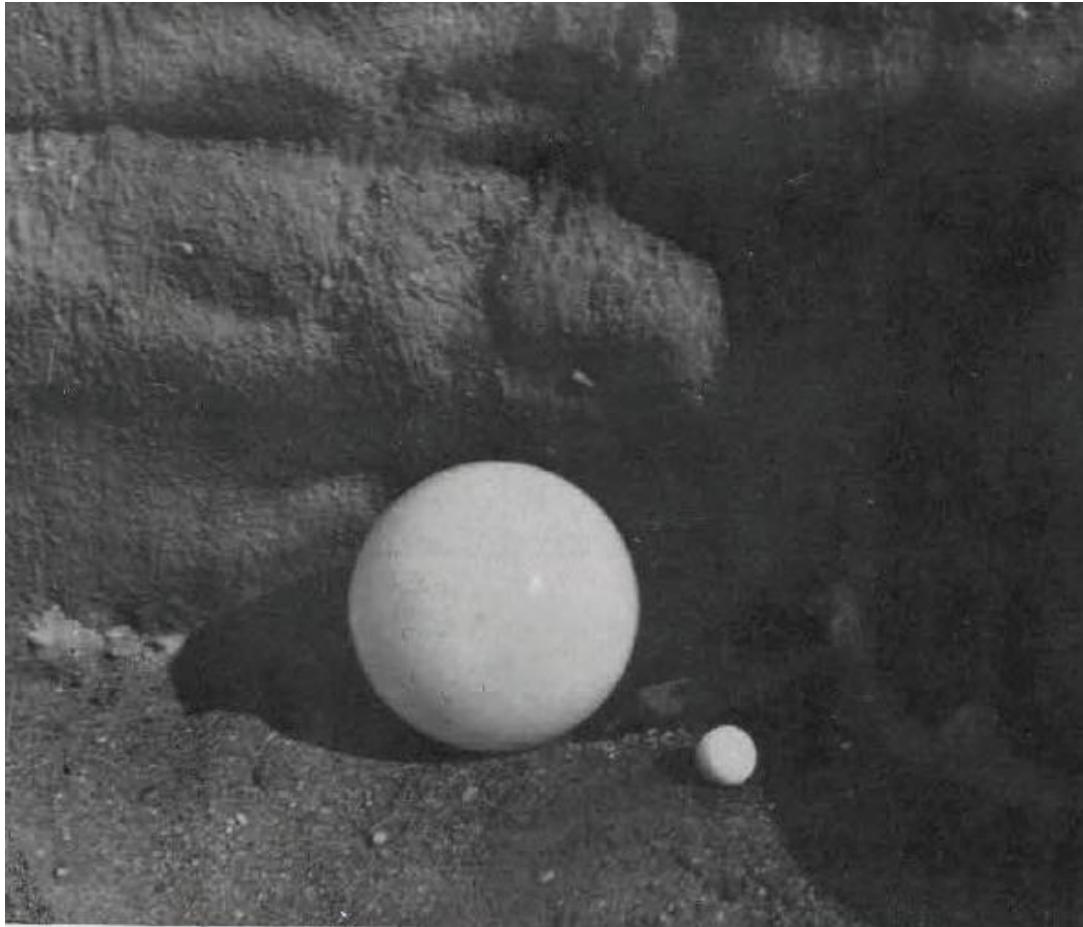
Shimozato Yoshio, Organic Art, 1940



Shimozato Yoshio, The Ninth Continent, 1939



Imai Shigeru, Still Life, 1939



Yamanaka Chirū, 1939

Eve in Eden ... before the Fall



New Poems by Contemporary Poets

Three New Poems by Aki Kurosawa

I have to bow and smile

Gray are the skies over Tokyo,
gray are the faces of the people
walking under the skies of Tokyo.

Gray are the socks I am wearing
gray are my dress and panties
that match the long socks that I am wearing

Gray is the color of my new desk at work
gray is the conversation I have
with my new boss at my desk at work.

Gray is the color of my computer screen
gray is the training film that explains everything
I need to do in my new job.

Gray is the uniform I have to wear
gray is the task I now have to do
but to keep it, I have to bow and smile.

The School Boy on the Bus

There is a school boy
who takes the same bus
I do each day.
He would be just fourteen.

I would always
stand in a corner
far from the push of
people near the doors.

I let the boy press against
me when the bus sways,
his hand touching my bare thigh ...
but I don't mind.

One day ... a bump ... his hand
went up my dress. I could
tell he was nervous
by the warm, shaking of it.

I knew what he wanted ...
my panties were in my purse.
It surprised him when
he touched my wet flesh.

I somehow knew I was
his first when his hand froze,
so I pressed my thighs together
as we swayed in time.

I would not let
him go, until I had
had my pleasures of him ...
he closed his eyes.

My leg brushed against him.
He drew in a breath.
I pressed and the sway
of the bus took hold.

I found his zipper
And then his enpitsu ...
thin, long and unsheathed
and started to write with it.

And there we were
the two of us alone
in our own world,
traveling together ... then ...

It was my stop. I left him standing
there, with a wet hand
... his wet underwear
and a contented smile.

His Little Insignificance

My boyfriend looks so funny
standing there
hanging out ...

That little insignificance that
means so much to him
yet means so little to me.

A daikon ... brings me greater pleasure!
A green bean ... a bowl of Edamame.

I wonder if his
insignificance were stolen away
would he still want to play with me?

To love that place
where his insignificance seems
always to ... hasten ...

To tickle and caress me
To feast on my sweet Aoyagi ...

Instead of always wanting
to press his insignificance

into me like a bull
might press a cow to heff'a calf.

It is his beef
that I just leave him
to stand and bray ...

milk me ...
milk me ...
milk me ...

And I am the cow?

Aki is always surprising us with the originality of her poetry, which is most times based on her fascinating love life. She recently parted ways with her latest boyfriend who had a rather big sense of his insignificance.

Aki is constantly reminded that men don't understand women the way they they wish to be understood. To a woman intimacy and sexuality are not inevitably the same thing. To a man they are one and the same!

Boys think bigger is better. Little do her boyfriends know that the bigger their insignificance, the less enjoyable love making is for Aki.

If only they knew that the first third of a woman's *ai no ton'neru* feels any pleasure. The rest does not. Then they would not press their insignificance

...

Into me like a bull

Might press a cow to heff'a calf.

It was when *Seiko no saichu ni* (still being a bit shy, Aki wanted this left in the original Japanese) her boy friend started to snort like a bull as he pressed her off the bed with his insignificance.

A lamp was casting his shadow on the far wall of the bedroom, and to Aki he looked like a bull having it out with a cow.

She started to laugh hysterically at the whole silliness of the moment. The images of daikons, green beans and edamame suddenly flashed into her mind. So she pushed him out of her.

But still he would not stop his braying and snorting, so she milked him like a milkmaid would. After he came Aki told him to go, and not come back.

“Watashi wa ushide wa arimasen!”

Ten things to do with a Polaroid Camera by Isabella Montsouris

I opened the birthday
gift that my uncle gave
me. What else could I say
with thank you but ... may
I take your picture?

Please do ... he smiled
do you like your new polaroid?
I nodded. It took me a while
to figure it all out. but boy ...
the first picture I took was a blur ...

I did not wait long enough
Waiting is hard for me
It is rather tough to count to ten
Then tear open the thing and
See that I had ruined it.

Try again ... the second was much better
than the first but the flash
had left him with red eyes

or maybe it was the fact
he had been drinking?

The third picture I took was
of my birthday cake, or what
Was left of it. After my brother
had taken another big piece ...
comme un couchon!

The fourth picture was
of my mother and dad
who just stood there
unhappy with their lives ...
you could see it in the eyes.

The fifth picture I left for
later when I was alone.
In the bedroom I stood before
my mirror and took a snapshot
of me taking a picture ... of me.

This made me wonder what

wonderful things I might do
with my new polaroid camera?
It could be my personal
window on the world.

I set it on the nightstand
Next to my bed and got undressed.
And thought ... but it was getting
Late and I had school first thing
tomorrow morning.

Should I take it to school?
No ... someone would steal it
For sure. After all it wasn't
every day a polaroid camera
was lurking about.

My two best friends asked
me what I got for my sixteenth
birthday. And so I told them ...
new shoes, a new dress, a bra and
Panties to match and a camera.

A camera! Take our pictures ...

Take our pictures! And so they
followed me home after school
that day and I took a snap of
each of them in turn.

And they took one of me too
Leaving just two pictures in the
camera. Well one had to be
of the three of us, for sure.
but something was missing!

It was Jean who knew what to do.
She whispered it in Nicole's ear and
She nodded. What? I asked. Jean
said promise me you will you do it?
So I did and well ...

This is the best thing to do
with your two best friends by far
with the last film in a box of polaroid
just don't get caught

or your mom will take away your camera!



Can you guess which one I am?

Romantic Poetry by Patrick Bruskiewich

I Have Lived For Art

I have lived for art.

I have lived for love.

They are nere apart.

But do I get enough

of either in a day?

Yes, if that day is full

of happiness and play.

Then I need not mull

as to whether I have

done all I can. It's

in the evidence of kind,

that my life be fully mine.

My Mona Lisa - Caterina

There are two faces

in the painting. One

we see – another left traces

beneath the surface. Come

let us look closer at the two Lisas.

The painting is a poser!

We know of La Gioconda;

let us ask whys she is

– hidden away – painted over. Who is
she we see? Maybe it is his mother, his
Lisa, John the Baptists he
be in his last painting

– the patron saint of Florentine Artists,
a wild scholar among wanton
family, pushing him down
– he had two sisters and
nine brothers, and five
mothers, but only one his
own, Catherina, the illegitimate one.

Both his father and mother
were dead when he painted
his Mona Lisa – he was
alone with his remembrances,
pushed out by his siblings,
forgotten – exiled into the
wilderness, to utter his wise
words alone – history will not
forget me – let them not forget
she who bore me, she
who pushed me into this world.

If I be John the Baptists,
then Elizabeth be my mother,
my Mona Lisa - Caterina

To Feel the Heat and Touch the Heart

I spend another night alone
in dreams of that other place,
where only peace and happiness grows
where bows, and belles, and pink lace
dance amidst the headiness of time,
where light is light, and joy is joy,
where being blissful is not a crime,
where one's heart is not a toy
and visages light the surreal day.

So ask me not, why then do I
return to that which is the real – I pray
one day, to stay among the bows,
the belles, the pink, the lace
to feel the heat, and touch the heart
of one who will never want to be apart

In the Middle of the Night

In the middle of the night
when all are asleep but I
what keeps me awake is fright,
that inescapable fear that I may die
before I wake. The clock strikes three

It is fatigue that catches me, and will
with certainty soon set me free
of that what binds me still
to my life, and how I am to be.
Then I drift to bless'd dream
that blissful state of willful being
without a care at all it seems,
with clos'd eyes and open'd mind
Seeing that fright is not death, but life.
Awake me nought for I slumber still.

Unwrap Me and Savour the Sweetness of Life

It was the touch electric, her
hand upon mine. I looked
up to see two shining eyes, sure
of herself, she smiled. This took
me by surprise, for I knew she
liked me, but how much, now
I knew it was more like love, be
may what it comes, now how
could there be any doubt, here
was someone who wanted to
unwrap me, and savour
the sweetness of life in its
fullness, so I smiled back.

Ah well, I could not stop her
nor would I want to. For I
knew what it was, and let it be

If They Love Their Flowers

What flowers do when we aren't
watching – am I old enough to know?
They have male and female parts
so close together as they grow ...
the stamen, the carpel, soft petals,
filaments, anthers and pollen
– sperm by any other name – that settles
on everything, drawing us all, and calling
the bees, with their stingers, out to play
in the middle of spring and summer days.
When we give a flower to a pretty girl,
if they love their flowers,
we too set the world
into male and female parts.

How do I mend A Broken Heart by Jenna

How do I mend a broken heart?
My entire world has fallen apart.



How do I find hope in a brand new day?
when the one I love has gone away?
My mind overflows with memories of you,
of all that we've shared, all that we knew.
I long for your touch and your warm embrace,
the look in your eyes, the smile on your face.
My dreams are filled with your soft gentle kiss.

I wake and cry for all that I miss.
How do I mend a broken heart,
when my one true love and I are apart?
My heart knows to love only you, it won't let go, what do I do?
Our moments together were precious and few,
but I cherished them all more than you knew.



I love you, my angel, and always will.
I loved you then and I love you still

Mountains are Forever by Susan Dale

The old mountain eyes, open
When glaciers crushed through creation
Were yet open when Indian tribes
Took refuge in their caverns
But blinking when pioneers
Brought wagons across mountain trails

The wise old eyes, closed tight now
Do not see snow, nor the wildflowers
Inching up their marble flesh
But moving beyond_____
until floating amongst mountain clouds
I turn to look back
Through six realms of infinity
And teeter at the precipice
Of memories and mortality
To remember the golden nectar
That dropped on crystal-clear days
Of measured spaces I thought would last
Until I lie by the broken pillars
At the feet of the gods of fate
Uncounted the smiles that stretched wide
My untried heart
My heart to be bitten off and spit out

After an epoch beginning from the womb
Of which I emerged, screaming and kicking
Solely to propagate the earth
With open arms did I embrace life

Life, that snarling, snorting creature
Panting, prowling, clamouring for time
Time, with its warm gauze breath
And spineless shadows
Growing thin in the hours
Stretching into tomorrow

Time, the melting wax and singed wicks
Of those days I sat
On the long hands of clocks tick-tocking
Through lemon-yellow afternoons
Shining with succulent sun

But that same, sticky-honey time
Is running into long abandoned coal-cellars
Piled with the ashes of yesterday
Not swept away,
But lying forgotten and gray

Dim, misty____ the dawn
When I could no longer see

The differentiating line
Between earth and sky
And when others see the milky way
Cresting a crescendo of stars
I see nets of night
Hanging in the skies to catch a waning moon
Creaky mouse sounds run around the corners of my head
And the luminous rains that sing to violets
Chill my bones
Quickly, I turn to the flicker of a shadow
Jump at a sudden light that slips
Into the walls behind time
And know I am two steps away from threadbare quiet
And the mortality sewn into the hem
Of every mortal fabric
We stood beneath it at Calvary
And see it forever and a thousand times
Wearing laurels of victory

Broken from the roots that held me to yesterday
A tumbleweed lost between dimensions
Blind, vacuous_____
Being swept along by the winds
Of space, of distance
Across the wounded earth
Into a sky I feel heaving with

heavy breaths and merciful heart
To make a place for me
Amongst myriad moons
And the long arms of eternity

That Feeling by April Chye

that feeling
when I'm on the streets drifting
past strangers past the spoken words past
the ghosts of a dead girl's memory where
an eyelash falls and I unblinking wish
for a greater existence than one painted
in crimson, and rained on in
tears

when headlights loom
and I stare into the brilliance of
its pure light – the scene in my head, where the man turns into satyr
strikes the girl thrice and walks away,
fades out into harsh glares as
flesh meets thought
with death as a
dream

and as a beautiful boy comes in
with an air that hums with life
and cares for nothing more than the
girl of a waxen face and honey-burnt eyes before him and
I consider this immaculate archetype of a species
while in retrospect remember something of a

flutter in my fingers to say goodbye and
feel my middle where emptiness now
resides

so here lies
the frame of a soul with fractures that
might have stitched up at
another train stop, if trains could veer
off the track they were made to travel forth
on and welcome aboard a boy
with his sun-spersed hands and tender smile but
we all make our own graves and mine
has been perfectly placed and perfectly
preserved up till
now

that feeling tells me
this is what happens before
a phoenix meets
flame

The New World by Mandi Henderson

The first tear of the new world breaks through in resounding stillness
His eyes shimmer as they give their first newfound look out into a birthed
world

Following the shadows of spiraling infinites his gaze graces the woman he
loves;

His world debuts

The universe of forever falls away as his existence enters with a resonant
blast

The man is the child reverting into a state of foreignness

His tongue falters in this love language

The charted map and the known paths reveal their multiplicities

Brown and green mix in an iris of explosions

And

...the second tear of the new world rolls down his cheek

The Shape of Things by Jessie Gaynor

On Smallness

Timothy Donnelly asked me
to name something tiny
and transcribed my answer,
rock-dust in the pocket
of a forgotten oxford shirt.

A place,

a crumbling lighthouse
on the Irish Sea.

A voice,

a gentle but hardened coyote
living in Central Park.

He covered a college-ruled page
with my blurted responses
before presenting his final category:

Something Vast.

A cookie?
A confected catcher's mitt.
That vast.

He would not commit to paper
my earnest foolishness,
even when I ventured

these cookies, from the café just there
(flustered gesture),
they are *right now*
they're the widest and
most unknowable thing
that does not terrify me.

And now ...

the lighthouse moss patch
instead of the Sea.
The bandit coyote's mate,
who seeks her tortured fellow
only in the grasses
above 89th Street,
only howls to herself.

Permutating

You say
I lava you
I livery you
I Lermontov you
I Los Lobos you
I frontal lobe you
And I am almost certain
I know what you mean.
Only the pre-mutated
declaration folds my face
into that of a piranha
or a robot: ignorant
of probability's scent,
crisp and bitter. Immune
to the rush of terror
flushed pleasure brings.

You're some kind of polymorph, woman
through, or through. You're shifting again.
Your eyes jingling like a pillbox full of straight pins,
I can only hear them because I'm looking hard.
You're a worsted tweed for the everyday gentlemen.
You're a hollowed bird-bone, in repose.
Sunglasses on the subway—unaffected Verlon—aggressive nonchalance.

The Shogun to my shotgun,
the pillar to my pillory,
the Odysseus to my oddness.

Woman ...

from the moment we know
we are finished,
we are ready to begin.

There is more to me than blood and bones by Sarah Gackle

There is more in me than blood and bones;
More than fibers stretching fibers holding muscle moving joint;
More than the spark of mind's fire, snapping synapses.

There is something deeper than senses.
Something I call good,
Something calling back, "not so."
I cannot remove it with a simple bloodletting,
Still it escapes me in spurting streams
Or rises to the surface of my skin and evaporates,
surrounding me, then dispersing.

Yours and mine gather together in a cloud
That storms and swells, collecting his, hers and theirs.
We strain our senses under an opaque sky;
Painted without illumination,
We cannot see that it is beautiful,
This why inside my blood and bones.

Thirteen Weeks by Deb Couch

The day is new.

The thought of you here with us is still new.

I long to love you like no one ever will

(I long to know if I can).

Today you are so slight - just a whisper, a downy flake.

Your fragile heart, connected to mine.

But with every rapid beat,

I love you already.

Today I don't know the feel of your skin,

the smell of your hair,

the sight of your eyes, that will one day be like home to me.

And yet, I hold you closer now than I ever will.

I wonder at how this will change.

I wonder if there will be a day

(when you're thirteen years old)

when you look at me dismissively

and believe that I could never understand you.

Today you are thirteen weeks.

I listen to your astounding heartbeat, and I want you to know:

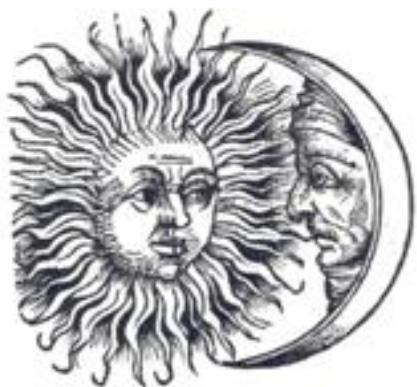
Closest, close, or far away –

My love will span the distance.

For you, always.

My love will.

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Poetry and Prose From the Past

Three Remarkable Poems by Pablo Neruda

A Song Of Despair

The memory of you emerges from the night around me.
The river mingles its stubborn lament with the sea.

Deserted like the wharves at dawn.
It is the hour of departure, oh deserted one!

Cold flower heads are raining over my heart.
Oh pit of debris, fierce cave of the shipwrecked.

In you the wars and the flights accumulated.
From you the wings of the song birds rose.

You swallowed everything, like distance.
Like the sea, like time. In you everything sank!

It was the happy hour of assault and the kiss.
The hour of the spell that blazed like a lighthouse.

Pilot's dread, fury of blind driver,
turbulent drunkenness of love, in you everything sank!

In the childhood of mist my soul, winged and wounded.

Lost discoverer, in you everything sank!

You girdled sorrow, you clung to desire,
sadness stunned you, in you everything sank!

I made the wall of shadow draw back,
beyond desire and act, I walked on.

Oh flesh, my own flesh, woman whom I loved and lost, I summon you in the moist hour, I raise my song to you.

Like a jar you housed infinite tenderness.
and the infinite oblivion shattered you like a jar.

There was the black solitude of the islands,
and there, woman of love, your arms took me in.

There was thirst and hunger, and you were the fruit.
There were grief and ruins, and you were the miracle.

Ah woman, I do not know how you could contain me in the earth of your soul, in the cross of your arms!

How terrible and brief my desire was to you! How difficult and drunken, how tensed and avid.

Cemetery of kisses, there is still fire in your tombs, still the fruited boughs burn, pecked at by birds.

Oh the bitten mouth, oh the kissed limbs,
oh the hungering teeth, oh the entwined bodies.

Oh the mad coupling of hope and force
in which we merged and despaired.

And the tenderness, light as water and as flour.
And the word scarcely begun on the lips.

This was my destiny and in it was my voyage of my longing, and in it my longing fell, in you everything sank!

Oh pit of debris, everything fell into you,
what sorrow did you not express, in what sorrow are you not drowned!

From billow to billow you still called and sang.
Standing like a sailor in the prow of a vessel.

You still flowered in songs, you still brike the currents.
Oh pit of debris, open and bitter well.

Pale blind diver, luckless slinger,

lost discoverer, in you everything sank!

It is the hour of departure, the hard cold hour
which the night fastens to all the timetables.

The rustling belt of the sea girdles the shore.
Cold stars heave up, black birds migrate

Deserted like the wharves at dawn.
Only tremulous shadow twists in my hands.

Oh farther than everything. Oh farther than everything.

It is the hour of departure. Oh abandoned one!

The Celestial Poets

What did you do, you Gideans,
intellectualizers, Rilkeans,
mystifiers, false existential
sorcerers, surrealist
butterflies incandescent
in the tomb, Europhile
cadavers in fashion,
pale worms in the capitalist
cheese, what did you do
confronted with the reign of anguish,
in the face of this dark human being,
the kicked-around dignity,
this head immersed
in manure, this essence
of coarse and trampled lives?

You did nothing but take flight:
sold a stack of debris,
searched for celestial hair,
cowardly plants, fingernail clippings,
“Pure Beauty,” “spells,”
works of the timid
good for averting the eyes,
for the confusion of delicate

pupils, surviving
on a plate of dirty leftovers
tossed at you by the masters,
not seeing the stone in agony,
no defense, no conquest,
more blind than wreaths
at the cemetery, when rain
falls on the flowers still
and rotten among the tombs.

And Because Love Battles

And because love battles
not only in its burning agricultures
but also in the mouth of men and women,
I will finish off by taking the path away
to those who between my chest and your fragrance want to interpose their
obscure plant.

About me, nothing worse
they will tell you, my love,
than what I told you.

I lived in the prairies
before I got to know you
and I did not wait love but I was
laying in wait for and I jumped on the rose.

What more can they tell you?
I am neither good nor bad but a man,
and they will then associate the danger
of my life, which you know
and which with your passion you shared.

And good, this danger
is danger of love, of complete love

for all life,
for all lives,
and if this love brings us
the death and the prisons,
I am sure that your big eyes,
as when I kiss them,
will then close with pride,
into double pride, love,
with your pride and my pride.

But to my ears they will come before
to wear down the tour
of the sweet and hard love which binds us,
and they will say: “The one
you love,
is not a woman for you,
Why do you love her? I think
you could find one more beautiful,
more serious, more deep,
more other, you understand me, look how she’s light,
and what a head she has,
and look at how she dresses,
and etcetera and etcetera”.

And I in these lines say:
Like this I want you, love,

love, Like this I love you,
as you dress
and how your hair lifts up
and how your mouth smiles,
light as the water
of the spring upon the pure stones,
Like this I love you, beloved.

To bread I do not ask to teach me
but only not to lack during every day of life.
I don't know anything about light, from where
it comes nor where it goes,
I only want the light to light up,
I do not ask to the night
explanations,
I wait for it and it envelops me,
And so you, bread and light
And shadow are.

You came to my life
with what you were bringing,
made
of light and bread and shadow I expected you,
and Like this I need you,
Like this I love you,
and to those who want to hear tomorrow

that which I will not tell them, let them read it here, and let them back off today because it is early for these arguments.

Tomorrow we will only give them
a leaf of the tree of our love, a leaf
which will fall on the earth
like if it had been made by our lips
like a kiss which falls
from our invincible heights
to show the fire and the tenderness
of a true love.

The Defence of Freedom and Peace by Winston Churchill

16 October 1938

Radio Broadcast to the United States and to London

I avail myself with relief of the opportunity of speaking to the people of the United States. I do not know how long such liberties will be allowed. The stations of uncensored expression are closing down; the lights are going out; but there is still time for those to whom freedom and parliamentary government mean something, to consult together. Let me, then, speak in truth and earnestness while time remains.

The American people have, it seems to me, formed a true judgment upon the disaster which has befallen Europe. They realize, perhaps more clearly than the French and British publics have yet done, the far-reaching consequences of the abandonment and ruin of the Czechoslovak Republic. I hold to the conviction I expressed some months ago, that if in April, May or June, Great Britain, France, and Russia had jointly declared that they would act together upon Nazi Germany if Herr Hitler committed an act of unprovoked aggression against this small State, and if they had told Poland, Yugoslavia, and Rumania what they meant to do in good time, and invited them to join the combination of peace-defending Powers, I hold that the German Dictator would have been confronted with such a formidable array that he would have been deterred from his purpose. This would also have been an opportunity for all the peace-loving and moderate forces in Germany, together with the chiefs of the German Army, to make a great effort to re-

establish something like sane and civilized conditions in their own country. If the risks of war which were run by France and Britain at the last moment had been boldly faced in good time, and plain declarations made, and meant, how different would our prospects be today!

But all these backward speculations belong to history. It is no good using hard words among friends about the past, and reproaching one another for what cannot be recalled. It is the future, not the past, that demands our earnest and anxious thought. We must recognize that the Parliamentary democracies and liberal, peaceful forces have everywhere sustained a defeat which leaves them weaker, morally and physically, to cope with dangers which have vastly grown. But the cause of freedom has in it a recuperative power and virtue which can draw from misfortune new hope and new strength. If ever there was a time when men and women who cherish the ideals of the founders of the British and American Constitutions should take earnest counsel with one another, that time is now.

All the world wishes for peace and security. Have we gained it by the sacrifice of the Czechoslovak Republic. Here was the model democratic State of Central Europe, a country where minorities were treated better than anywhere else. It has been deserted, destroyed and devoured. It is now being digested. The question which is of interest to a lot of ordinary people, common people, is whether this destruction of the Czechoslovak Republic will bring upon the world a blessing or a curse.

We must all hope it will bring a blessing; that after we have averted our gaze for a while from the process of subjugation and liquidation, everyone will breathe more freely; that a load will be taken off our chests; we shall be able to say to ourselves: "Well, that's out of the way, anyhow. Now let's get on with our regular daily life." But are these hopes well founded or are we merely making the best of what we had not the force and virtue to stop? That is the question that the English-speaking peoples in all their lands must ask themselves today. Is this the end, or is there more to come?

There is another question which arises out of this. Can peace, goodwill, and confidence be built upon submission to wrong-doing backed by force?

One may put this question in the largest form. Has any benefit or progress ever been achieved by the human race by submission to organised and calculated violence? As we look back over the long story of the nations we must see that, on the contrary, their glory has been founded upon the spirit of resistance to tyranny and injustice, especially when these evils seemed to be backed by heavier force. Since the dawn of the Christian era a certain way of life has slowly been shaping itself among the Western peoples, and certain standards of conduct and government have come to be esteemed. After many miseries and prolonged confusion, there arose into the broad light of day the conception of the right of the individual; his right to be consulted in the government of his country; his right to invoke the law even against the State itself. Independent Courts of Justice were created to affirm and enforce this hard-won custom. Thus was assured throughout the English-speaking world, and in France by the stern lessons of the Revolution, what Kipling called,

“Leave to live by no man’s leave underneath the law.” Now in this resides all that makes existence precious to man, and all that confers honour and health upon the State.

We are confronted with another theme. It is not a new theme; it leaps out upon us from the Dark Ages – racial persecution, religious intolerance, deprivation of free speech, the conception of the citizen as a mere soulless fraction of the State. To this has been added the cult of war. Children are to be taught in their earliest schooling the delights and profits of conquest and aggression. A whole mighty community has been drawn painfully, by severe privations, into a warlike frame. They are held in this condition, which they relish no more than we do, by a party organization, several millions strong, who derive all kinds of profits, good and bad, from the upkeep of the regime. Like the Communists, the Nazis tolerate no opinion but their own. Like the Communists, they feed on hatred. Like the Communists, they must seek, from time to time, and always at shorter intervals, a new target, a new prize, a new victim. The Dictator, in all his pride, is held in the grip of his Party machine. He can go forward; he cannot go back. He must blood his hounds and show them sport, or else, like Actaeon of old, be devoured by them. All-strong without, he is all-weak within. As Byron wrote a hundred years ago: “These Pagod things of Sabre sway, with fronts of brass and feet of clay.”

No one must, however, underrate the power and efficiency of a totalitarian state. Where the whole population of a great country, amiable, good-hearted, peace-loving people are gripped by the neck and by the hair by a Communist or a Nazi tyranny – for they are the same things spelt in different ways – the

rulers for the time being can exercise a power for the purposes of war and external domination before which the ordinary free parliamentary societies are at a grievous practical disadvantage. We have to recognize this. And then, on top of all, comes this wonderful mastery of the air which our century has discovered, but of which, alas, mankind has so far shown itself unworthy. Here is this air power with its claim to torture and terrorize the women and children, the civil population of neighbouring countries.

This combination of medieval passion, a party caucus, the weapons of modern science, and the blackmailing power of air-bombing, is the most monstrous menace to peace, order and fertile progress that has appeared in the world since the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century.

The culminating question to which I have been leading is whether the world as we have known it – the great and hopeful world of before the war, the world of increasing hope and enjoyment for the common man, the world of honoured tradition and expanding science – should meet this menace by submission or by resistance. Let us see, then, whether the means of resistance remain to us today. We have sustained an immense disaster; the renown of France is dimmed. In spite of her brave, efficient army, her influence is profoundly diminished. No one has a right to say that Britain, for all her blundering, has broken her word – indeed, when it was too late, she was better than her word. Nevertheless, Europe lies at this moment abashed and distracted before the triumphant assertions of dictatorial power. In the Spanish Peninsula, a purely Spanish quarrel has been carried by the

intervention, or shall I say the “non-intervention” (to quote the current Jargon) of Dictators into the region of a world cause.

But it is not only in Europe that these oppressions prevail. China is being torn to pieces by a military clique in Japan; the poor, tormented Chinese people there are making a brave and stubborn defence. The ancient empire of Ethiopia has been overrun. The Ethiopians were taught to look to the sanctity of public law, to the tribunal of many nations gathered in majestic union. But all failed; they were deceived, and now they are winning back their right to live by beginning again from the bottom a struggle on primordial lines. Even in South America, the Nazi regime begins to undermine the fabric of Brazilian society.

Far away, happily protected by the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, you, the people of the United States, to whom I now have the chance to speak, are the spectators, and I may add the increasingly involved spectators of these tragedies and crimes. We are left in no doubt where American conviction and sympathies lie; but will you wait until British freedom and independence have succumbed, and then take up the cause when it is three-quarters ruined, yourselves alone? I hear that they are saying in the United States that because England and France have failed to do their duty therefore the American people can wash their hands of the whole business. This may be the passing mood of many people, but there is no sense in it. If things have got much worse, all the more must we try to cope with them.

For, after all, survey the remaining forces of civilisation; they are overwhelming. If only they were united in a common conception of right and duty, there would be no war. On the contrary, the German people, industrious, faithful, valiant, but alas! lacking in the proper spirit of civic independence, liberated from their present nightmare, would take their honoured place in the vanguard of human society. Alexander the Great remarked that the people of Asia were slaves because they had not learned to pronounce the word “No.” Let that not be the epitaph of the English-speaking peoples or of Parliamentary democracy, or of France, or of the many surviving liberal States of Europe.

There, in one single word, is the resolve which the forces of freedom and progress, of tolerance and good will, should take. It is not in the power of one nation, however formidably armed, still less is it in the power of a small group of men, violent, ruthless men, who have always to cast their eyes back over their shoulders, to cramp and fetter the forward march of human destiny. The preponderant world forces are upon our side; they have but to be combined to be obeyed. We must arm. Britain must arm. America must arm. If, through an earnest desire for peace, we have placed ourselves at a disadvantage, we must make up for it by redoubled exertions, and, if necessary, by fortitude in suffering.

We shall, no doubt, arm. Britain, casting away the habits of centuries, will decree national service upon her citizens. The British people will stand erect, and will face whatever may be coming.

But arms – instrumentalities, as President Wilson called them – are not sufficient by themselves. We must add to them the power of ideas. People say we ought not to allow ourselves to be drawn into a theoretical antagonism between Nazidom and democracy; but the antagonism is here now. It is this very conflict of spiritual and moral ideas which gives the free countries a great part of their strength. You see these dictators on their pedestals, surrounded by the bayonets of their soldiers and the truncheons of their police. On all sides they are guarded by masses of armed men, cannons, aeroplanes, fortifications, and the like – they boast and vaunt themselves before the world, yet in their hearts there is unspoken fear. They are afraid of words and thoughts; words spoken abroad, thoughts stirring at home – all the more powerful because forbidden – terrify them. A little mouse of thought appears in the room, and even the mightiest potentates are thrown into panic. They make frantic efforts to bar our thoughts and words; they are afraid of the workings of the human mind. Cannons, airplanes, they can manufacture in large quantities; but how are they to quell the natural promptings of human nature, which after all these centuries of trial and progress has inherited a whole armoury of potent and indestructible knowledge?

Dictatorship – the fetish worship of one man – is a passing phase. A state of society where men may not speak their minds, where children denounce their parents to the police, where a business man or small shopkeeper ruins his competitor by telling tales about his private opinions; such a state of society cannot long endure if brought into contact with the healthy outside world. The light of civilized progress with its tolerances and co-operation, with its dignities and joys, has often in the past been blotted out. But I hold

the belief that we have now at last got far enough ahead of barbarism to control it, and to avert it, if only we realise what is afoot and make up our minds in time. We shall do it in the end. But how much harder our toil for every day's delay!

Is this a call to war? Does anyone pretend that preparation for resistance to aggression is unleashing war? I declare it to be the sole guarantee of peace. We need the swift gathering of forces to confront not only military but moral aggression; the resolute and sober acceptance of their duty by the English-speaking peoples and by all the nations, great and small, who wish to walk with them. Their faithful and zealous comradeship would almost between night and morning clear the path of progress and banish from all our lives the fear which already darkens the sunlight to hundreds of millions of men.

The Veiled Woman by Anais Nin

George once went to a Swedish bar he liked, and sat at a table to enjoy a leisurely evening. At the next table he noticed a very stylish and handsome couple, the man suave and neatly dressed, the woman all in black, with a veil over her glowing face and brilliant colored jewelry. They both smiled at him. They said nothing to one another, as if they were very old acquaintances and had no need to talk.

The three of them watched the activity at the bar – couples drinking together, a woman drinking alone, a man in search of adventures – and all seemed to be thinking the same things.

Finally the neatly dressed man began a conversation with George, who now had a chance to observe the woman at length and found her even more beautiful. But just when he expected her to join in the conversation, she said a few words to her companion that George could not catch, smiled, and glided off.

George was crestfallen. His pleasure in the evening was gone. Furthermore, he had only a few dollars to spend, and he could not invite the man to drink with him and discover perhaps a little more about the woman.

To his surprise, it was the man who turned to him and said, ‘Would you care to have a drink with me?’

George accepted. Their conversation went from experiences with hotels in the South of France to George's admission that he was badly in need of money. The man's response implied that it was extremely easy to obtain money. He did not go on to say how. He made George confess a little more.

Now George had a weakness in common with many men; when he was in an expansive mood, he loved to recount his exploits. He did this in intriguing language. He hinted that as soon as he set foot in the street some adventure presented itself, that he was never at a loss for an interesting evening, or for an interesting woman.

His companion smiled and listened.

When George had finished talking, the man said, 'That is what I expected of you the moment I saw you. You are the fellow I am looking for. I am confronted with an immensely delicate problem. Something absolutely unique. I don't know if you have had many dealings with difficult, neurotic women -

No? I can see that from your stories. Well, I have. Perhaps I attract them. Just now I am in the most intricate situation. I hardly know how to get out of it. I need your help. You say you need money. Well, I can suggest a rather pleasant way of making some. Listen carefully. There is a woman who is wealthy and absolutely beautiful - in fact, flawless.

She could be devotedly loved by anyone she pleased, she could be married to anyone she pleased. But for one perverse accident of her nature – she only likes the unknown.

‘But everybody likes the unknown,’ said George, thinking immediately of voyages, unexpected encounters, novel situations.

‘No, not in the way she does. She is interested only in a man she has never before and never will see again. And for this man she will do anything.’

George was burning to ask if the woman was the one who had been sitting at the table with them. But he did not dare. The man seemed to be rather unhappy to have to tell, and yet was impelled to tell, this story. He continued, ‘I have this woman’s happiness to watch over. I would do anything for her. I have devoted my life to satisfying her caprices.’

‘I understand,’ said George. ‘I could feel the same way about her.

‘Now,’ said the elegant stranger, ‘if you would like to come with me, you could perhaps solve your financial difficulties for a week, and incidentally, perhaps, your desire for adventure.

George flushed with pleasure. They left the bar together. The man hailed a taxi. In the taxi he gave George fifty dollars. Then he said he was obliged to

blindfold him, that George must not see the house he was going to, nor the street, as he was never to repeat this experience.

George was in a turmoil of curiosity now, with visions of the woman he had seen at the bar haunting him, seeing each moment her glowing mouth and burning eyes behind the veil. What he had particularly liked was her hair. He liked thick hair that weighed a face down, a gracious burden, odorous and rich. It was one of his passions.

The ride was not very long. He submitted amiably to all the mystery. The blindfold was taken off his eyes before he came out of the taxi so as not to attract the attention of the taxi driver or doorman, but the stranger had counted wisely on the glare of the entrance lights to blind George completely. He could see nothing but brilliant lights and mirrors.

He was ushered into one of the most sumptuous interiors he had ever seen – all white and mirrored, with exotic plants, exquisite furniture covered in damask and such a soft rug that their footsteps were not heard. He was led through one room after another, each in different shades, all mirrored, so that he lost all sense of perspective. Finally, they came to the last. He gasped slightly.

He was in a bedroom with a canopied bed set on a dais. There were furs on the door and vaporous white curtains at the windows, and mirrors, more mirrors. He was glad that he could bear these repetitions of himself, infinite reproductions of a handsome man, to whom the mystery of the situation had

given a glow of expectation and alertness he had never known. What could this mean? He did not have time to ask himself.

The woman who had been at the bar entered the room, and just as she entered, the man who had brought him to the place vanished.

She had changed her dress. She wore a striking satin gown that left her shoulders bare and was held in place by a ruffle. George had the feeling that the dress would fall from her at one gesture, strip from her like a glistening sheath, and that underneath would appear her glistening skin, which shone like satin and was equally smooth to the fingers.

He had to hold himself in check. He could not yet believe that this beautiful woman was offering herself to him, a complete stranger.

He felt shy, too. What did she expect of him? What was her quest? Did she have an unfulfilled desire?

He had only one night to give all his lover's gifts. He was never to see her again. Could it be he might find the secret to her nature and possess her more than once. He wondered how many men had come to this room.

She was extraordinarily lovely, with something of both satin and velvet in her. Her eyes were dark and moist, her mouth glowed, her skin reflected the light. Her body was perfectly balanced. She had the incisive lines of a slender woman together with a provocative ripeness.

Her waist was very slim, which gave her breasts an even greater prominence. Her back was like a dancer's, and every undulation set off the richness of her hips. She smiled at him. Her mouth was soft and full and half-open. George approached her and laid his mouth on her bare shoulders. Nothing could be softer than her skin. What a temptation to push the fragile dress from her shoulders and expose the breasts which distended the satin. What a temptation to undress her immediately.

But George felt that this woman could not be treated so summarily, that she required subtlety and adroitness. Never had he given to his every gesture so much thought and artistry. He seemed determined to make a long siege of it, and as she gave no sign of hurry, he lingered over her bare shoulders, inhaling the faint and marvelous odor that came from her body.

He could have taken her then and there, so potent was the charm she cast, but first he wanted her to make a sign, he wanted her to be stirred, not soft and pliant like wax under his fingers.

She seemed amazingly cool, obedient but without feeling. Never a ripple on her skin, and though her mouth was parted for kissing, it was not responsive.

They stood there near the bed, without speaking. He passed his hands along the satin curves of her body, as if to become familiar with it. She was unmoved. He slipped slowly to his knees as he kissed and caressed her body. His fingers felt that under the dress she was naked. He led her to the edge of

the bed and she sat down. He took off her slippers. He held her feet in his hands.

She smiled at him, gently and invitingly. He kissed her feet, and his hands ran under the folds of the long dress, feeling the smooth legs up to the thighs.

She abandoned her feet to his hands, held them pressed against his chest now, while his hands ran up and down her legs under the dress. If her skin was so soft along the legs, what would it be then near her sex, there where it was always the softest? Her thighs were pressed together so he could not continue to explore. He stood and leaned over her to kiss her into a reclining position. As she lay back, her legs opened slightly.

He moved his hands all over her body, as if to kindle each little part of it with his touch, stroking her again from shoulders to feet, before he tried to slide his hand between her legs, more open now, so that he could almost reach her sex.

With his kisses her hair had become disheveled, and the dress had fallen off her shoulders and partly uncovered her breasts. He pushed it off altogether with his mouth, revealing the breasts he had expected, tempting, taut, and of the finest skin, with roseate tips like those of a young girl.

Her yielding almost made him want to hurt her, so as to rouse her in some way. The caresses roused him but not her. Her sex was cool and soft to his finger, obedient, but without vibrations.

George began to think that the mystery of the woman lay in her not being able to be aroused. But it was not possible. Her body promised such sensuality. The skin was so sensitive, the mouth so full. It was impossible that she should not feel. Now he caressed her continuously, dreamfully, as if he were in no hurry, waiting for the flame to be kindled in her.

There were mirrors all around them, repeating the image of the woman lying there, her dress fallen off her breasts, her beautiful naked feet hanging over the bed, her legs slightly parted under the dress.

He must tear the dress off completely, lie in bed with her, feel her whole body against his. He began to pull the dress down, and she helped him. Her body emerged like that of Venus coming out of the sea. He lifted her so that she would lie fully on the bed, and his mouth never ceased kissing every part of her body.

Then a strange thing happened. When he leaned over to feast his eyes on the beauty of her sex, its rosiness, she quivered, and George almost cried out for joy.

She murmured, ‘Take your clothes off.

He undressed. Naked, he knew his power. He was more at ease naked than clothed because he had been an athlete, a swimmer, a walker, a mountain climber. And he knew then that he could please her.

She looked at him.

Was she pleased? When he bent over her, was she more responsive? He could not tell. By now he desired her so much that he could not wait to touch her with the tip of his sex, but she stopped him. She wanted to kiss and fondle it. She set about this with so much eagerness that he found himself with her full backside near his face and able to kiss and fondle her to his content.

By now he was taken with the desire to explore and touch every nook of her body. He parted the opening of her sex with his two fingers, he feasted his eyes on the glowing skin, the delicate flow of honey, the hair curling around his fingers. His mouth grew more and more avid, as if it had become a sex organ in itself, capable of so enjoying her that if he continued to fondle her flesh with his tongue he would reach some absolutely unknown pleasure. As he bit into her flesh with such a delicious sensation, he felt again in her a quiver of pleasure. Now he forced her away from his sex, for fear she might experience all her pleasure merely kissing him and that he would be cheated of feeling himself inside of her womb. It was as if they both had become ravenously hungry for the taste of flesh. And now their two mouths melted into each other, seeking the leaping tongues.

Her blood was fired now. By his slowness he seemed to have done this, at last. Her eyes shone brilliantly, her mouth could not leave his body. And finally he took her, as she offered herself, opening her vulva with her lovely fingers, as if she could no longer wait. Even then they suspended their pleasure, and she felt him quietly, enclosed.

Then she pointed to the mirror and said, laughing, ‘Look, it appears as if we were not making love, as if I were merely sitting on your knees, and you, you rascal, you have had it inside me all the time, and you’re even quivering. Ah, I can’t bear it any longer, this pretending I have nothing inside. It’s burning me up. Move now, move! ’

She threw herself over him so that she could gyrate around his erect penis, deriving from this erotic dance a pleasure which made her cry out. And at the same time a lightning flash of ecstasy tore through George’s body.

Despite the intensity of their lovemaking, when he left, she did not ask him his name, she did not ask him to return. She gave him a light kiss on his almost painful lips and sent him away. For months the memory of this night haunted him and he could not repeat the experience with any woman.

One day he encountered a friend who had just been paid lavishly for some articles and invited him to have a drink. He told George the spectacular story of a scene he had witnessed. He was spending money freely in a bar when a very distinguished man approached him and suggested a pleasant pastime, observing a magnificent love scene, and as George’s friend happened to be a

confirmed voyeur, the suggestion met with instant acceptance. He had been taken to a mysterious house, into a sumptuous apartment, and concealed in a dark room, where he had seen a nymphomaniac making love with an especially gifted and potent man.

George's heart stood still. 'Describe her,' he said.

His friend described the woman George had made love to, even to the satin dress. He also described the canopied bed, the mirrors, everything. George's friend had paid one hundred dollars for the spectacle, but it had been worthwhile and had lasted for hours.

Poor George. For months he was wary of women. He could not believe such perfidy, and such play-acting. He became obsessed with the idea that the women who invited him to their apartments were all hiding some spectator behind a curtain.

A Man and a Woman by Brassai



Brassai: The Eye of Paris by Henry Miller

Brassai has that rare gift which so many artists despise—normal vision. He has no need to distort or deform, no need to lie or to preach. He would not alter the living arrangement of the world by one iota; he sees the world precisely as it is and as few men in the world see it because seldom do we encounter a human being endowed with normal vision. Everything to which his eye attaches itself acquires value and significance, a value and significance, I might say, heretofore avoided or ignored. The fragment, the defect, the commonplace—he detects in them what there is of novelty or perfection. He explores with equal patience, equal interest, a crack in the wall or the panorama of a city. Seeing becomes an end in itself. For Brassai is an eye, a living eye.

When you meet the man you see at once that he is equipped with no ordinary eyes. His eyes have that perfect, limpid sphericity, that all-embracing voracity which makes the falcon or the shark a shuddering sentinel of reality. He has the eyeball of the insect which, hypnotized by its myopic scrutiny of the world, raises its two huge orbs from their sockets in order to acquire a still greater flexibility. Eye to eye with this man you have the sensation of a razor operating on your own eyeball, a razor which moves with such delicacy and precision that you are suddenly in a ball room in which the act of undressing follows upon the wish. His gaze pierces the retina like those marvelous probes which penetrate the labyrinth of the ear in order to sound for dead bone, which tap at the base of the skull like the dull tick of a watch in moments of complete silence. I have felt the penetration of his gaze like

the gleam of a searchlight invading the hidden recesses of the eye, pushing open the sliding doors of the brain. Under that keen, steady gaze I have felt the seat of my skull glowing like an asbestos grill, glowing with short, violet waves which no living matter can resist. I have felt the cool, dull tremors in every vertebra, each socket, each nodule, cushion and fiber vibrating at such a speed that the whole backbone together with my rudimentary tail is thrown into incandescent relief. My spine becomes a barometer of light registering the pressure and deflection of all the waves which escape the heavy, fluid substance of matter. I feel the feathery, jubilant weight of his eye rising from its matrix to brush the prisms of light. Not the eye of a shark, nor a horse, nor a fly, not any known flexible eye, but the eye of a coccus newborn, a coccus travelling on the wave of an epidemic, always a millimeter in advance of the crest. The eye that gloats and ravages. The eye that precedes doom. The waiting, lurking eye of the ghoul, the torpid, monstrously indifferent eye of the leper, the still, all-inclusive eye of the Buddha which never closes. *The insatiable eye.*

It is with this eye that I see him walking through the wings of the Folies-Bergère, walking across the ceiling with sticky, clinging feet, crawling on all fours over candelabras, warm breasts, crinolines, training that huge, cold searchlight on the inner organs of a Venus, on the foam of a wave of lace, on the cicatrices that are dyed with ink in the satin throat of a puppet, on the pulleys that will hoist a Babylon in paint and papier-mâché, on the empty seats which rise tier upon tier like layers of sharks' teeth. I see him walking across the proscenium with his beautiful suede gloves, see him peeling them off and tossing them to the inky squib which has swallowed the seats and the

glass chandeliers, the fake marble, the brass posts, the thick velvet cords and the chipped plaster. I see the world of behind the scenes upside down, each fragment a new universe, each human body or puppet or pulley framed in its own inconceivable niche. I see the lovely Venus prone and full athwart her strange axis, her hair dipped in laudanum, her mouth bright with asphodels; she lies in the neap of the tide, taut with starry sap, her toes tinctured with light, her eyes transfixed. He does not wait for the curtain to rise; he waits for it to fall. He waits for that moment when all the conglomerations artificially produced resolve back into their natural component entities, when the nymphs and the dryads strewing themselves like flowers over the floor of the stage gaze vacantly into the mirror of the tank where a moment ago, tessellated with spotlights, they swam like goldfish.

Deprived of the miracle of color, registering everything in degrees of black and white, Brassai nevertheless seems to convey by the purity and quality of his tones all the effects of sunlight, and even more impressively the effects of night light. A man of the city, he limits himself to that spectacular feast which only such a city as Paris can offer. No phase of cosmopolitan life has escaped his eye. His albums of black and white comprise a vast encyclopaedia of the city's architecture, its growth, its history, its origins. Whatever aspect of the city his eye seizes upon the result is a vast metaphor whose brilliant arc, studded with incalculable vistas backward and forward, glistens now like a drop of dew suspended in the morning light. The Cemetery Montmartre, for example, shot from the bridge at night is a phantasmagoric creation of death flowering in electricity, the intense patches of night lie upon the tombs and crosses in a crazy patchwork of steel girders

which fade with the sunlight into bright green lawns and flower beds and graveled walks.

Brassai strikes at the accidental modulations, the illogical syntax, the mythical juxtaposition of things, at that anomalous, sporadic form of growth which a walk through the streets or a glance at a map or a scene in a film conveys to the sleeping portion of the brain. What is most familiar to the eye, what has become stale and commonplace, acquires through the flick of his magic lens the properties of the unique. Just as a thousand diverse types may write automatically and yet only one of them will bear the signature of André Breton, so a thousand men may photograph the Cemetery Montmartre but one of them will stand out triumphantly as Brassai's. No matter how perfect the machine, no matter how little of human guidance is involved, the mark of personality is always there. The photograph seems to carry with it the same degree of personality as any other form or expression of art. Brassai is Brassai and Man Ray is Man Ray. One man may try to interfere as little as possible with the apparatus, or the results obtained from the apparatus; the other may endeavor to subjugate it to his will, to dominate it, control it, use it like an artist. But no matter what the approach or the technique involved the thing that registers is the stamp of individuality.

Perhaps the difference which I observe between the work of Brassai and that of other photographers lies in this—that Brassai seems overwhelmed by the fullness of life. How else are we to explain that a chicken bone, under the optical alchemy of Brassai, acquires the attributes of the marvelous, whereas the most fantastic inventions of other men often leave us with a sense of

unfulfillment? The man who looked at the chicken bone transferred his whole personality to it in looking at it; he transmitted to an insignificant phenomenon the fullness of his knowledge of life, the experience acquired from looking at millions of other objects and participating in the wisdom which their relationships one to another inspired. The desire which Brassai so strongly evinces, a desire not to tamper with the object but regard it as it is, was this not provoked by a profound humility, a respect and reverence for the object itself? The more the man detached from his view of life, from the objects and identities that make life, all intrusion of individual will and ego, the more readily and easily he entered into the multitudinous identities which ordinarily remain alien and closed to us. By depersonalizing himself, as it were, he was enabled to discover his personality everywhere in everything.

Perhaps this is not the method of art. Perhaps art demands the wholly personal, the catalytic power of will. Perhaps. All I know is that when I look at these photographs which seem to have been taken at random by a man loath to assert any values except what were inherent in the phenomena, I am impressed by their authority. I realize in looking at his photos that by looking at things aesthetically, just as much as by looking at things moralistically or pragmatically, we are destroying their value, their significance. Objects do not fade away with time: they are destroyed! From the moment that we cease to regard them awesomely they die. They may carry on an existence for thousands of years, but as dead matter, as fossil, as archaeologic data. What once inspired an artist or a people can, after a certain moment, fail to elicit even the interest of a scientist. Objects die in

proportion as the vision of things dies. The object and the vision are one. Nothing flourishes after the vital flow is broken, neither the thing seen, nor the one who sees.

It happens that the man who introduced me to Brassai is a man who has no understanding of him at all, a sort of human cockroach living out his dream of the 18th century. He knows all the Metro stations by heart, can recite them backwards for you, line by line; he can give you the history of each arrondissement, can tell you precisely where and how one street intersects another, can give you the genesis of every statue and monument in Paris. But he has absolutely no feeling for the streets, no wanderlust, no curiosity, no reverence. He secretes himself in his room and lives out in imagination the hermeneutic life of the 18th century.

I mention this only as an example of the strange fatality by which two men of kindred spirit are sometimes brought together. I mention it by way of showing that even the despised cockroach serves a purpose in life. I see that the cockroach living out its dream of the 18th century can serve as a link to bind the living. It was this same cockroach, I must also confess, who revealed to me the glamor of the 13th arrondissement. In the very heart of it, like a spider luring me to its lair, there lived all the while this man Brassai whom I was destined to meet. I remember vividly how, when I first came to Paris, I wandered one day to his hotel looking for a painter. The man who received me was not the man I had expected to see. He was a petty, niggardly, querulous soul who had once painted a knife and fork and rested there. I had to return to America, come back to France once again, starve,

roam the streets, listen to silly, idiotic theories of life and art, take up with this failure and that, and finally surrender to the cockroach before it was possible to know the man who like myself had taken in Paris without effort of will, the man who, without my knowing it, was silently slaving away at the illustrations for my books. And when one day the door was finally thrust open I beheld to my astonishment a thousand replicas of all the scenes, all the streets, all the walls, all the fragments of that Paris wherein I died and was born again. There on his bed, in myriad pieces and arrangements, lay the cross to which I had been nailed and crucified, the cross on which I was resurrected to live again and forever in the spirit.

How then am I to describe these morsels of black and white, how refer to them as photographs or specimens of art? Here on this man's bed, drained of all blood and suffering, radiant now with only the life of the sun, I saw my own sacred body exposed, the body that I have written into every stone, every tree, every monument, park, fountain, statue, bridge, and dwelling of Paris. I see now that I am leaving behind me a record of Paris which I have written in blood—but also in peace and good will. The whole city—every arrondissement, every carrefour, every impasse, every enchanted street. Through me Paris will live again, a little more, a little brighter.

Tenderly, reverently, as if I were gathering to my breast the most sentient morsels of myself, I pick up these fragments which lie on the bed. Once again I traverse the road that led me to the present, to this high, cool plateau whence I can look about me in serenity. What a procession passes before my eyes! What a throng of men and women! What strange cities—and situations

stranger still! The mendicant sitting on the public bench, thirsting for a glimmer of sun, the butcher standing in a pool of blood with knife upraised, the scows and barges dreaming in the shadows of the bridges, the pimp standing against a wall with cigarette in hand, the street cleaner with her broom of reddish twigs, her thick, gnarled fingers, her high stomach draped in black, a shroud over her womb, rinsing away the vomit of the night before so that when I pass over the cobblestones my feet will gleam with the light of morning stars. I see the old hats, the sombreros and fedoras, the velours and Panamas that I painted with a clutching fury; I see the corners of walls eroded by time and weather which I passed in the night and in passing felt the erosion going on in myself, corners of my own walls crumbling away, blown down, dispersed, reintegrated elsewhere in mysterious shape and essence. I see the old tin urinals where, standing in the dead silence of the night, I dreamed so violently that the past sprang up like a white horse and carried me out of the body.

Looking for an instant into the eyes of this man I see therein the image of myself. Two enormous eyes I see, two glowing discs which look up at the sun from the bottom of a pool; two round, wondrous orbs that have pushed back the heavy, opaque lids in order to swim up to the surface of the light and drink with unslakeable thirst. Heavy tortoise eyes that have drunk from every stratum; soft, viscous eyes that have burrowed into the mud sinks, tracked the worm and shell; hard, sclerotic gems, bead and nugget, over which the heel of man has passed and left no imprint. Eye that lurks in the primal ooze, lord and master of all it surveys; not waiting on history, not

waiting on time. The cosmologic eye, persisting through wrack and doom, impervious, inchoate, seeing only what is.

Now and then, in wandering through the streets, suddenly one comes awake, perceives with a strange exultation that he is moving through an absolutely fresh slice of reality. Everything has the quality of the marvelous—the murky windows, the rain-sodden vegetables, the contours of the houses, the bill-posters, the slumping figures of men and women, the tin soldiers in the stationery shops, the colors of the walls—everything written down in an unfamiliar script. After the moment of ecstasy has passed what is one's amazement but to discover that the street through which he is walking with eyes popping is the street on which he lives. He has simply come upon it unaware, from the wrong end perhaps. Or, moving out of the confines of an unknown region, the sense of wonder and mystery prolonged itself in defiance of reality. It is as if the eye itself had been freshened, as if it had forgotten all that it had been taught. In this condition it happens that one really does see things he had never seen before—not the fantastic, harrowing, hallucinating objects of dream or drug, but the most banal, the most commonplace things, seen as it were for the first time.

Walking one night along a dark, abandoned street of Levallois-Perret suddenly across the way I notice a window lit up. As I approach the reddish glow of the room awakens something in me, some obscure memory which stirs sleepily, only to be drowned again in deeper memories. The hideous pattern of the wallpaper, which I can only vaguely decipher, seems as familiar to me as if I had lived with it all my life. The weird, infernal glow of

the room throws the pattern of the wallpaper into violent relief; it leaps out from the wall like the frantic gesture of a madman. My heart is in my throat. My step quickens. I have the sensation of being about to look into the privacy of a room such as no man has seen before.

As I come abreast of the window I notice the glass bells suspended from the chandelier—three glass bells such as are manufactured by the million and which are the pride of every poverty-stricken home wherever there are progress and invention. Under this modern, universal whatnot are gathered three of the most ordinary people that could possibly be grouped together—a tintype of honest toil snapped on the threshold of Utopia. Everything in the room is familiar to me, nauseatingly familiar: the cupboard, the chain, the table, the tablecloth, the rubber plant, the bird cage, the alarm dock, the calendar on the wall, the Sunday it registers and the saint who rules it. And yet never have I seen such a tintype as this. This is so ordinary, so familiar, so stale, so commonplace, that I have never really noticed it before.

The group is composed of two men and a woman. They are standing around the cheap, polished walnut table—the table that is not yet paid for. One man is in his shirt sleeves and wears a cap; the other man is wearing a pair of striped flannel pajamas and has a black derby tilted on the back of his head. The woman is in a dressing sack and one of her titties is falling out. A large juicy teat with a dark, mulberry nipple swimming in a deep coffee stain full of fine wrinkles. On the table is a large dishpan filled with boiling water. The man with cap and shirt sleeves has just doused something in the pan; the

other man stands with his hands in his pockets and quietly puffs a cigarette, allowing the ash to fall on his pajama coat and from there to the table.

Suddenly the woman grabs the queer-looking object from the man with the cap and, holding it somewhat above her head, she commences plucking at it with lean, tenacious fingers. It is a dead chicken with black and red feathers and a bright red-toothed comb. While she holds the legs of the chicken with one hand the man with the cap holds the neck; at intervals they lower the dead chicken into the pan of boiling water. The feathers come out easily, leaving the slightly yellowish skin full of black splinters. They stand there facing each other without uttering a word. The woman's fingers move nimbly from one area of the chicken to another—until she comes to the little triangular flap over the vent when with one gleeful clutch she rips out all the tail feathers at once and flinging them on the floor drops the chicken on the table.

Strike me pink if I have ever seen anything more grotesque! Taken in combination, under that light, at that hour of the night, the three tintypes, the peculiar deadness of the chicken, the scene remains unique in my memory. Every other chicken, dressed or undressed, is scalded from my memory. Henceforth whenever I say chicken there will always come to mind two kinds—this chicken, whose name I do not know, and all other chickens. Chicken prime, let us say, so as to distinguish it from all other chicken integers that were and will be tomorrow, henceforth and forevermore.

And so it is, when I look at the photographs of Brassai, that I say to myself—chicken prime, table prime, chair prime, Venus prime, etc. That which constitutes the uniqueness of an object, the first, the original, the imperishable vision of things. When Shakespeare painted a horse, said a friend of mine once, it was a horse for all time. I must confess that I am largely unfamiliar with the horses of Shakespeare, but knowing as I do certain of his human characters, and knowing also that they have endured throughout several centuries, I am quite willing to concede that his horses too, whoever and wherever they are, will have a long and abiding life. I know that there are men and women who belong just as distinctly and inexpugnably to Rembrandt's world, or Giotto's, or Renoir's. I know that there are sleeping giants who belong to the Grimm family or to Michelangelo, and dwarfs who belong to Velasquez or Hieronymus Bosch, or to Toulouse-Lautrec. I know that there are physiognomic maps and relics of the human body which is all that we possess of buried epochs, all that is personal and understandable to us, and that these maps and relics bear the distinguished imprimatur of Dante, da Vinci, Petronius and such like. I know too that even when the human body has been disintegrated and made an inhuman part of a fragmented world—such as the one we now inhabit—I mean that when the human body, having lost its distinction and kingship, serves the painter with no more inspiration, no more reverence than a table or chair or discarded newspaper, still it is possible to recognize one sort of hocus-pocus from another, to say this is Braque, that is Picasso, the other Chirico.

We have reached the point where we do not want to know any longer whose work it is, whose seal is affixed, whose stamp is upon it; what we want, and what at last we are about to get, are individual masterpieces which triumph in such a way as to completely subordinate the accidental artists who are responsible for them. Every man today who is really an artist is trying to kill the artist in himself—and he must, if there is to be any art in the future. We are suffering from a plethora of art. We are artridden. Which is to say that instead of a truly personal, truly creative vision of things, we have merely an aesthetic view. Empty as we are, it is impossible for us to look at an object without annexing it to our collection. We have not a single chair, for example, in the sweep and memory of our retina, that does not bear a label; if, for the space of a week, a man working in absolute secrecy were to turn out chairs unique and unrecognizable, the world would go mad. And yet every chair that is brought into existence is howling for recognition as chair, as chair in its own right, unique and perdurable.

I think of chair because among all the objects which Brassai has photographed his chair with the wire legs stands out with a majesty that is singular and disquieting. It is a chair of the lowest denomination, a chair which has been sat on by beggars and by royalty, by little trot-about whores and by queenly opera divas. It is a chair which the municipality rents daily to any and every one who wishes to pay fifty centimes for sitting down in the open air. A chair with little holes in the seat and wire legs which come to a loop at the bottom. The most unostentatious, the most inexpensive, the most ridiculous chair, if a chair can be ridiculous, which could be devised. Brassai chose precisely this insignificant chair and, snapping it where he found it,

unearthed what there was in it of dignity and veracity. THIS IS A CHAIR. Nothing more. No sentimentalism about the lovely backsides which once graced it, no romanticism about the lunatics who fabricated it, no statistics about the hours of sweat and anguish that went into the creation of it, no sarcasm about the era which produced it, no odious comparisons with chairs of other days, no humbug about the dreams of the idlers who monopolize it, no scorn for the nakedness of it, no gratitude either. Walking along a path of the Jardin des Tuileries one day he saw this chair standing on the edge of a grating. He saw at once chair, grating, tree, clouds, sun, people. He saw that the chair was as much a part of that fine spring day as the tree, the clouds, the sun, the people. He took it as it was, with its honest little holes, its slender wire legs. Perhaps the Prince of Wales once sat on it, perhaps a holy man, perhaps a leper, perhaps a murderer or an idiot. Who sat on it did not interest Brassai in the least. It was a spring day and the foliage was greening; the earth was in a ferment, the roots convulsed with sap. On such a day, if one is alive, one can well believe that out of the dead body of the earth there will spring forth a race of men immortal in their splendor. On such a day there is visible in the stalest object a promise, a hope, a possibility. Nothing is dead, except in the imagination. Animate or inanimate, all bodies under the sun give expression to their vitality. Especially on a fine day in spring!

And so on that day, in that glorious hour, the homely, inexpensive chair belonging to the municipality of Paris became the empty throne which is always beseeching the restless spirit of man to end his fear and longing and proclaim the kingdom of man.

Twelve Sad Poems by Sylvia Plath

THE MANOR GARDEN

The fountains are dry and the roses over.
License of death. Your day approaches.
The pears fatten like little buddhas.
A blue mist is dragging the lake.
You move through the era of fishes,
The smug centuries of the pig—
Head, toe and finger
Come clear of the shadow. History
Nourishes these broken flutings,
These crowns of acanthus,
And the crow settles her garments.
You inherit white heather, a bee's wing,
Two suicides, the family wolves,
Hours of blankness. Some hard stars
Already yellow the heavens.
The spider on its own string
Crosses the lake. The worms
Quit their usual habitations.
The small birds converge, converge
With their gifts to a difficult borning.

TWO VIEWS OF A CADAVER ROOM

1

The day she visited the dissecting room
They had four men laid out, black as burnt turkey,
Already half unstrung. A vinegary fume
Of the death vats clung to them;
The white-smocked boys started working.
The head of his cadaver had caved in,
And she could scarcely make out anything
In that rubble of skull plates and old leather.
A sallow piece of string held it together.
In their jars the snail-nosed babies moon and glow.
He hands her the cut-out heart like a cracked heirloom.

2

In Brueghel's panorama of smoke and slaughter
Two people only are blind to the carrion army:
He, afloat in the sea of her blue satin
Skirts, sings in the direction
Of her bare shoulder, while she bends,
Fingering a leaflet of music, over him,
Both of them deaf to the fiddle in the hands
Of the death's-head shadowing their song.
These Flemish lovers flourish; not for long.
Yet desolation, stalled in paint, spares the little country

Foolish, delicate, in the lower right hand corner.

NIGHT SHIFT

It was not a heart, beating,
That muted boom, that clangour
Far off, not blood in the ears
Drumming up any fever
To impose on the evening.
The noise came from the outside:
A metal detonating
Native, evidently, to
These stilled suburbs: nobody
Startled at it, though the sound
Shook the ground with its pounding.
It took root at my coming
Till the thudding source, exposed,
Confounded inept guesswork:
Framed in windows of Main Street's
Silver factory, immense
Hammers hoisted, wheels turning,
Stalled, let fall their vertical
Tonnage of metal and wood;
Stunned the marrow. Men in white
Undershirts circled, tending
Without stop those greased machines,

Tending, without stop, the blunt
Indefatigable fact.

SOW

God knows how our neighbour managed to breed
His great sow:
Whatever his shrewd secret, he kept it hid
In the same way
He kept the sow—impounded from public stare,
Prize ribbon and pig show.
But one dusk our questions commended us to a tour
Through his lantern-lit
Maze of barns to the lintel of the sunk sty door
To gape at it:
This was no rose-and-larkspurred china suckling
With a penny slot
For thrifty children, nor dolt pig ripe for heckling,
About to be
Glorified for prime flesh and golden crackling
In a parsley halo;
Nor even one of the common barnyard sows,
Mire-smirched, blowzy,
Maunching thistle and knotweed on her snout-cruise—
Bloat tun of milk
On the move, hedged by a litter of feat-foot ninnies

Shrilling her hulk
To halt for a swig at the pink teats. No. This vast
Brobdignag bulk
Of a sow lounged belly-bedded on that black compost,
Fat-rutted eyes
Dream-filmed. What a vision of ancient hoghood must
Thus wholly engross
The great grandam!—our marvel blazoned a knight,
Helmed, in cuirass,
Unhorsed and shredded in the grove of combat
By a grisly-bristled
Boar, fabulous enough to straddle that sow's heat.
But our farmer whistled,
Then, with a jocular fist thwacked the barrel nape,
And the green-copse-castled
Pig hove, letting legend like dried mud drop,
Slowly, grunt
On grunt, up in the flickering light to shape
A monument
Prodigious in gluttonies as that hog whose want
Made lean Lent
Of kitchen slops and, stomaching no constraint,
Proceeded to swill
The seven trouged seas and every earthquaking
continent.

THE EYE-MOTE

Blameless as daylight I stood looking
At a field of horses, necks bent, manes blown,
Tails streaming against the green
Backdrop of sycamores. Sun was striking
White chapel pinnacles over the roofs,
Holding the horses, the clouds, the leaves
Steadily rooted though they were all flowing
Away to the left like reeds in a sea
When the splinter flew in and stuck my eye,
Needling it dark. Then I was seeing
A melding of shapes in a hot rain:
Horses warped on the altering green,
Outlandish as double-humped camels or unicorns,
Grazing at the margins of a bad monochrome,
Beasts of oasis, a better time.
Abrading my lid, the small grain burns:
Red cinder around which I myself,
Horses, planets and spires revolve.
Neither tears nor the easing flush
Of eyebaths can unseat the speck:
It sticks, and it has stuck a week.
I wear the present itch for flesh,
Blind to what will be and what was.
I dream that I am Oedipus.

What I want back is what I was
Before the bed, before the knife,
Before the brooch-pin and the salve
Fixed me in this parenthesis;
Horses fluent in the wind,
A place, a time gone out of mind.

HARDCASTLE CRAGS

Flintlike, her feet struck
Such a racket of echoes from the steely street,
Tacking in moon-blued crooks from the black
Stone-built town, that she heard the quick air ignite
Its tinder and shake
A firework of echoes from wall
To wall of the dark, dwarfed cottages.
But the echoes died at her back as the walls
Gave way to fields and the incessant seethe of grasses
Riding in the full
Of the moon, manes to the wind,
Tireless, tied, as a moon-bound sea
Moves on its root. Though a mist-wraith wound
Up from the fissured valley and hung shoulder-high
Ahead, it fattened
To no family-featured ghost,
Nor did any word body with a name

The blank mood she walked in. Once past
The dream-peopled village, her eyes entertained no
dream,
And the sandman's dust
Lost lustre under her footsoles.
The long wind, paring her person down
To a pinch of flame, blew its burdened whistle
In the whorl of her ear, and like a scooped-out pumpkin
crown
Her head cupped the babel.
All the night gave her, in return
For the paltry gift of her bulk and the beat
Of her heart was the humped indifferent iron
Of its hills, and its pastures bordered by black stone set
On black stone. Barns
Guarded broods and litters
Behind shut doors; the dairy herds
Knelt in the meadow mute as boulders;
Sheep drowsed stoneward in their tussocks of wool, and
birds,
Twig-sleeping, wore
Granite ruffs, their shadows
The guise of leaves. The whole landscape
Loomed absolute as the antique world was
Once, in its earliest sway of lymph and sap,
Unaltered by eyes,

Enough to snuff the quick
Of her small heat out, but before the weight
Of stones and hills of stones could break
Her down to mere quartz grit in that stony light
She turned back.

FAUN

Haunched like a faun, he hooed
From grove of moon-glint and fen-frost
Until all owls in the twigged forest
Flapped black to look and brood
On the call this man made.

No sound but a drunken coot
Lurching home along river bank.
Stars hung water-sunk, so a rank
Of double star-eyes lit
Boughs where those owls sat.

An arena of yellow eyes
Watched the changing shape he cut,
Saw hoof harden from foot, saw sprout
Goat-horns. Marked how god rose
And galloped Woodward in that guise.

DEPARTURE

The figs on the fig tree in the yard are green;
Green, also, the grapes on the green vine
Shading the brickred porch tiles.
The money's run out.
How nature, sensing this, compounds her bitters.
Ungifted, ungrieved, our leavetaking.
The sun shines on unripe corn.
Cats play in the stalks.
Retrospect shall not soften such penury—
Sun's brass, the moon's steely patinas,
The leaden slag of the world—
But always expose
The scraggy rock spit shielding the town's blue bay
Against which the brunt of outer sea
Beats, is brutal endlessly.
Gull-fouled, a stone hut
Bares its low lintel to corroding weathers:
Across that jut of ochreous rock
Goats shamble, morose, rank-haired,
To lick the sea-salt.

THE COLOSSUS

I shall never get you put together entirely,
Pieced, glued, and properly jointed.
Mule-bray, pig-grunt and bawdy cackles

Proceed from your great lips.
It's worse than a barnyard.
Perhaps you consider yourself an oracle,
Mouthpiece of the dead, or of some god or other.
Thirty years now I have laboured
To dredge the silt from your throat.
I am none the wiser.
Scaling little ladders with gluepots and pails of lysol
I crawl like an ant in mourning
Over the weedy acres of your brow
To mend the immense skull-plates and clear
The bald, white tumuli of your eyes.
A blue sky out of the Oresteia
Arches above us. O father, all by yourself
You are pithy and historical as the Roman Forum.
I open my lunch on a hill of black cypress.
Your fluted bones and acanthine hair are littered
In their old anarchy to the horizon-line.
It would take more than a lightning-stroke
To create such a ruin.
Nights, I squat in the cornucopia
Of your left ear, out of the wind,
Counting the red stars and those of plum-colour.
The sun rises under the pillar of your tongue.
My hours are married to shadow.
No longer do I listen for the scrape of a keel

On the blank stones of the landing.

LORELEI

It is no night to drown in:
A full moon, river lapsing
Black beneath bland mirror-sheen,
The blue water-mists dropping
Scrim after scrim like fishnets
Though fishermen are sleeping,
The massive castle turrets
Doubling themselves in a glass
All stillness. Yet these shapes float
Up toward me, troubling the face
Of quiet. From the nadir
They rise, their limbs ponderous
With richness, hair heavier
Than sculpted marble. They sing
Of a world more full and clear
Than can be. Sisters, your song
Bears a burden too weighty
For the whorled ear's listening
Here, in a well-steered country,
Under a balanced ruler.
Deranging by harmony
Beyond the mundane order,

Your voices lay siege. You lodge
On the pitched reefs of nightmare,
Promising sure harbourage;
By day, descant from borders
Of hebetude, from the ledge
Also of high windows. Worse
Even than your maddening
Song, your silence. At the source
Of your ice-hearted calling—
Drunkenness of the great depths.
O river, I see drifting
Deep in your flux of silver
Those great goddesses of peace.
Stone, stone, ferry me down there.

POINT SHIRLEY

From Water-Tower Hill to the brick prison
The shingle booms, bickering under
The sea's collapse.
Snowcakes break and welter. This year
The gritted wave leaps
The seawall and drops onto a bier
Of quahog chips,
Leaving a salty mash of ice to whiten
In my grandmother's sand yard. She is dead,

Whose laundry snapped and froze here, who
Kept house against
What the sluttish, rutted sea could do.
Squall waves once danced
Ship timbers in through the cellar window;
A thresh-tailed, lanced
Shark littered in the geranium bed—
Such collusion of mulish elements
She wore her broom straws to the nub.
Twenty years out
Of her hand, the house still hugs in each drab
Stucco socket
The purple egg-stones: from Great Head's knob
To the filled-in Gut
The sea in its cold gizzard ground those rounds.
Nobody wintering now behind
The planked-up windows where she set
Her wheat loaves
And apple cakes to cool. What is it
Survives, grieves
So, over this battered, obstinate spit
Of gravel? The waves'
Spewed relics clicker masses in the wind,
Grey waves the stub-necked eiders ride.
A labour of love, and that labour lost.
Steadily the sea

Eats at Point Shirley. She died blessed,
And I come by
Bones, bones only, pawed and tossed,
A dog-faced sea.
The sun sinks under Boston, bloody red.
I would get from these dry-papped stones
The milk your love instilled in them.
The black ducks dive.
And though your graciousness might stream,
And I contrive,
Grandmother, stones are nothing of home
To that spumiest dove.
Against both bar and tower the black sea runs.

THE BULL OF BENDYLAW

The black bull bellowed before the sea.
The sea, till that day orderly,
Hove up against Bendylaw.
The queen in the mulberry arbour stared
Stiff as a queen on a playing card.
The king fingered his beard.
A blue sea, four horny bull-feet,
A bull-snouted sea that wouldn't stay put,
Bucked at the garden gate.
Along box-lined walks in the florid sun

Toward the rowdy bellow and back again
The lords and ladies ran.
The great bronze gate began to crack,
The sea broke in at every crack,
Pellmell, blueblack.
The bull surged up, the bull surged down,
Not to be stayed by a daisy chain
Nor by any learned man.
O the king's tidy acre is under the sea,
And the royal rose in the bull's belly,
And the bull on the king's highway.

Romantic Poetry by Dorothy Parker

Light of Love

Joy stayed with me a night—
Young and free and fair—
And in the morning light
He left me there.

Then Sorrow came to stay,
And lay upon my breast;
He walked with me in the day.
And knew me best.

I'll never be a bride.
Nor yet celibate,
So I'm living now with Pride—
A cold bedmate.

He must not hear nor see,
Nor could he forgive,
That Sorrow still visits me
Each day I live.

A Very Short Song

Once, when I was young and true.

Someone left me sad—

Broke my brittle heart in two;

And that is very bad.

Love is for unlucky folk.

Love is but a curse.

Once there was a heart I broke;

And that, I think, is worse.

The Small Hours

No more my little song comes back;

And now of nights I lay

My head on down, to watch the black

And wait the unfailing gray.

Oh, sad are winter nights, and slow;

And sad's a song that's dumb;

And sad it is to lie and know

Another dawn will come.

The False Friends

They laid their hands upon my head.

They stroked my cheek and brow;

And time could heal a hurt, they said.

And time could dim a vow.

And they were pitiful and mild
Who whispered to me then,
“The heart that breaks in April, child,
Will mend in May again.”

Oh, many a mended heart they knew.
So old they were, and wise.
And little did they have to do
To come to me with lies!

Who flings me silly talk of May
Shall meet a hitter soul;
For June was nearly spent away
Before my heart was whole.

The Trifler

Death’s the lover that I’d he taking;
Wild and fickle and fierce is he.
Small’s his care if my heart be breaking—
Gay young Death would have none of me.

Hear them clack of my haste to greet him!

No one other my mouth had kissed.
I had dressed me in silk to meet him—
False young Death would not hold the tryst.

Slow's the blood that was quick and stormy.
Smooth and cold is the bridal bed;
I must wait till he whistles for me—
Proud young Death would not turn his head.

I must wait till my breast is wilted,
I must wait till my back is bowed,
I must rock in the comer, jilted—
Death went galloping down the road.

Gone's my heart with a trifling rover.
Fine he was in the game he played—
Kissed, and promised, and threw me over.
And rode away with a prettier maid.

A Well Worn Story

In April, in April,
My one love came along.
And I ran the slope of my high hill
To follow a thread of song.

His eyes were hard as porphyry
With looking on cruel lands;
His voice went slipping over me
Like terrible silver hands.

Together we trod the secret lane
And walked the muttering town.
I wore my heart like a wet, red stain
On the breast of a velvet gown.

In April, in April,
My love went whistling by,
And I stumbled here to my high hill
Along the way of a lie.

Now what should I do in this place
But sit and count the chimes.
And splash cold water on my face
And spoil a page with rhymes?

Convalescent

How shall I wail, that wasn't meant for weeping?
Love has run and left me, oh, what then?
Dream, then, I must, who never can be sleeping;
What if I should meet Love, once again?

What if I met him, walking on the highway?
Let him see how lightly I should care.
He'd travel his way, I would follow my way;
Hum a little song, and pass him there.

What if at night, beneath a sky of ashes.
He should seek my doorstep, pale with need?
There could he lie, and dry would be my lashes;
Let him stop his noise, and let me read.

Oh, but I'm gay, that's better off without him;
Would he'd come and see me, laughing here.
Lord! Don't I know I'd have my arms about him.
Crying to him, "Oh, come in, my dear!"

Rainy Night

Ghosts of all my lovely sins,
Who attend too well my pillow,
Gay the wanton rain begins;
Hide the limp and tearful willow.

Turn aside your eyes and ears,
Trail away your robes of sorrow.
You shall have my further years—

You shall walk with me tomorrow.

I am sister to the rain;
Fey and sudden and unholy.
Petulant at the windowpane.
Quickly lost, remembered slowly.

I have lived with shades, a shade;
I am hung with graveyard flowers.
Let me be tonight arrayed
In the silver of the showers.

Every fragile thing shall rust;
When another April passes
I may be a furry dust,
Sifting through the brittle grasses.

All sweet sins shall be forgot;
Who will live to tell their siring?
Hear me now, nor let me rot
Wistful still, and still aspiring.

Ghosts of dear temptations, heed;
I am frail, be you forgiving.
See you not that I have need
To be living with the living?

Sail, tonight, the Styx's breast;
Glide among the dim processions
Of the exquisite unblest.
Spirits of my shared transgressions.

Roam with young Persephone,
Plucking poppies for your slumber ...
With the morrow, there shall be
One more wraith among your number.

Surrealist and Dada Poetry

East River Nudes by Mildred Weston

They stand
As if to take a dare,
At water's edge,
Boy bathers,
Bare,
Drawn up
To meet a city stare:



Long legs,
Round heads,
The span between
As spare as wood
And whittled clean,

They make
A river bank design
As lewd
As clothe-spins
On a line.

Ars Poetica by Archibald MacLeish

A poem should be palatable and mute
As a gobbled fruit

Dumb
As old medallion to the thumb

Silent as the sleeve-worn stone
Of casement ledges where the moss has grown –

A poem should be wordless
As the flight of birds

A poem should be motionless in time
As the moon climbs

Leaving, as the moon releases
Twig-by-twig the night entangled trees

Leaving, as the moon behind the winter leave,
Memory by memory the mind –

A poem should be equal to:

Not true

For all the history of grief
An empty doorway and a Maple Leaf

For love

The greening grasses and two lights above the sea –

A poem should not mean

But be!

Poetry for Intellectuals by Louis Dudek

If you say in a poem “grass is green,”
They all ask, “what do you mean?”

“That nature is ignorant,” you reply,
“And on a deeper level – youth must die!”

If you say in a poem “grass is red,”
They understand what you have said!

The Loving Dexterity by William Carlos Williams

The flower

Fallen

She saw it

A pink petal

intact

Deftly

Placed it

On

Its stem

again

Portrait of a Machine by Louis Untermeyer

What nudity is as beautiful as this

Obedient monster purring at its toil;

These naked iron muscles dripping oil

And the sure-fingered rods that never miss.

This long and shining flank of metal is

Magic that greasy labor cannot spoil;

While this vast engine that could rend the soil

Conceals its fury with a gentle hiss.

It does not vent its loathing, does not turn
Upon its makers with destroying hate.
It bears a deeper malice; throbs to earn
It's master's bread and lives to see this great
Lord of the earth, who rules but cannot learn,
Become the slave of what the slaves create.

Un by e. e. cummings

Un
der fog
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wli

whichs
turn

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est

people
be
come
un

Dreams are Dogs a Haiku

Dreams are dogs: they sniff
Avidly at any scent;
Shake it off, move on.

My Dream by Ani Gavani

He throbbing
me wet
thinking
cock!

I
ached

so

giant wholeness.

 insides me
 in entirety

I

ached

so

Please

Don't

Stop!

put it back

the hard of him

 his thrusts

 in wanted loins

 and ...

I

ached

so

Script: The Birth of Samuel by Patrick Bruskiewich

Characters

Hannah, the First Wife

Angel Gabriel

Hannah Husband

Penninah, the Second wife

Boy and Girl, Penninah's children.

Three women, Sarah, Rachel and Maryam

Props

As outlined in play

SAMUEL ACT ONE

Scene One

Graveyard Mid-morning

[Hannah, dressed plainly, is walking barefoot towards a grave. She is holding a small bouquet of flowers.]

[The bright mid-morning sun is behind her and she is casting her shadow where she is walking.]

[The camera begins close behind her. She is walking forward. The wind is following her from behind. It starts as a breeze and then picks up in intensity into a whirlwind as she walks the ten steps towards the grave.]

[With each step the camera pulls back from her and opens the camera angle. When she gets to the grave she kneels and the wind suddenly dies. She sets the flowers down beside her to the right.]

[When the wind dies you can hear that Hannah is crying. She starts to clear the grave and then picks the flowers up and sets them down on the grave.]

[Then a shadow appears in front of her. She looks up at the shadow and is fearful. Hannah pauses for a moment before she looks back over her shoulder.]

[There is an apparition standing behind her but behind him is the sun and so she cannot see him distinctly.]

[She assumes it is her father.]

HANNAH

Hello ...

GABRIEL

Why are you crying little one?

HANNAH

Because I am sad.

GABRIEL

Why are you sad?

HANNAH

You know why ... today is my birthday.

GABRIEL

You should be happy on your birthday. After all it is the day you came into the world.

HANNAH

How can I be happy!

[she gives out a big sob.]

GABRIEL

Why?

HANNAH

You know why.

[Hannah dries her eyes with a handkerchief. Then she looks back again over her shoulder before continuing.]

HANNAH

It is also the day my mother died.

GABRIEL

Why should you be sad then? She brought you into this world.

HANNAH

I cannot be happy on this day.

GABRIEL

I think your mother would want you to be happy on your birthday.
Why are you sad then?

HANNAH

Because she is gone. My mother is dead.

GABRIEL

Your mother is in heaven with God.

HANNAH

I rather she be here with me.

GABRIEL

But your mother is here with you Hannah...

HANNAH

No she isn't! How can she be here with me? She is dead.

GABRIEL

But she is here with you!

HANNAH

How can she be here with me? She is buried here in this grave.

GABRIEL

Are you not thinking of her?

HANNAH

Yes.

GABRIEL

Do you not love her?

HANNAH

You know I do.

GABRIEL

Then is she not here in spirit? Your mother is within your heart, as she is within you.

[Hannah sobs]

GABRIEL

Your mother is within every part of you and what you do.

[Hannah drops her head]

HANNAH

But ... I never knew my mother.

GABRIEL

You know you look just like her.

[Hannah looks up at the apparition with a start]

HANNAH

Do I. Do I really look like my mother?

GABRIEL

Not only do you look like here ... you also have her mannerisms ...
he have her hopes ... and her fears.

[Hannah draws her hands close to her breasts]

HANNAH

Do I!

GABRIEL

And just like you she was scared to have a child.

HANNAH

Was she!

GABRIEL

Yes she was

HANNAH

Then why did she?

GABRIEL

So she could have you. So she could hold you in her arms.

HANNAH

She held me in her arms ...

GABRIEL

Yes and you both cried.

HANNAH

We both cried?

GABRIEL

Yes ... You out of fear and she out of joy. Her prayers to God had been answered.

[Hannah starts to cry]

GABRIEL

You cried because you were scared ... you were cold ... you were hungry. You could not understand what was happening to you.

HANNAH

I don't remember that.

GABRIEL

No new born babies do. You had been washed and your mother took you up in your swaddling clothes. You were very beautiful.

HANNAH

Was I?

GABRIEL

Yes. Your mother swayed you back and forth in her arms while that which comes after the birth left her body. Then the difficulties began

...

HANNAH

Difficulties?

GABRIEL

You had been born healthy and fine, but your mother knew then that she would not survive. We all knew. I prayed to God that she would be there to see you grow and become who you now are.

[Hannah covers her ears with her hands.]

HANNAH

Father ... do not tell me anymore!

GABRIEL

I am not your father but an angel sent here to speak to you. Are you listening Hannah?

[The apparition goes silent. There is a pause. A feather floats and lands before Hannah. She sees the feather and picks it up.]

GABRIEL

Then she held you to her breast.

[Hannah is silent]

GABRIEL

And you suckled ... and you stopped crying and fell asleep.

[Hannah gives out a big sigh]

GABRIEL

And as you slept she named you Hannah and said you are a gift from god. She prayed that God would look after you.

HANNAH

A gift from God but at what cost? Her life?

GABRIEL

Yours ... your mother knew what she was doing.

[Hannah leans forward and sets her forehead on the ground above her mother's grave.]

HANNAH

I am scared too ...

GABRIEL

I know little one. But you have no reason to be scared.

HANNAH

What if I die while giving birth ... just like my mother?

GABRIEL

You will not die Hannah.

[Hannah bolts upwards]

HANNAH

How do you know that?

GABRIEL

I just know ... You must have faith little one.

HANNAH

I do have faith! I pray to God morning and night.

GABRIEL

That I know ...

HANNAH

But still ... I am without child. Perhaps it is because I am are too scared?

GABRIEL

Perhaps ...

HANNAH

Perhaps I am meant to not have children.

GABRIEL

Do you not know the way to beget child.

HANNAH

Yes ... I must lie with my husband in the way that a man and a women does to beget child.

GABRIEL

Yes, a man and a women should share a bed together. But that is not all.

HANNAH

We do love each other. What else must there be?

GABRIEL

You must be with him at the right time and in the right way.

HANNAH

What mean you?

GABRIEL

To beget child you must lie with your husband at that exact middle hour between your letting of the blood.

HANNAH

Exact middle hour between ...

GABRIEL

Fourteen days after ... fourteen days before ... and at that exact middle hour.

HANNAH

I did not know that.

GABRIEL

Since you grew up without your mother no one has been there to tell you this.

HANNAH

Tell me what?

GABRIEL

That in what of you a baby is made, your uterus, is like the top of a sand clock, and your blood is like the sand keeping time.

[Hannah scoops a handful of sand and lets it drop from her hand watching the sand closely as it drops.]

HANNAH

I wonder

GABRIEL

At that middle hour your uterus is best ready to receive that which your husband contributes to make a baby.

HANNAH

Why only then?

GABRIEL

Then and only then is the time right to make a baby.

HANNAH

...why have you not told me this before?

GABRIEL

You have never asked, until today. At that moment fourteen days between that is when a child can be begot.

HANNAH

That is two days hence. We leave for Shiloh this morning.

GABRIEL

Then midway on the road to Shiloh ... you should lie with your husband.

HANNAH

And what of Penninah?

GABRIEL

Do not worry of her. She shall be so tired from the trip and from looking after her two children that she shall be fast sleep and not know.

HANNAH

She always provokes and torments me ...

GABRIEL

Ignore her!

HANNAH

I cannot do that.

GABRIEL

Why can you not ignore her?

HANNAH

She constantly reminds him that she has begot my husband two children ... and I have not.

GABRIEL

I think the two children remind him of that every day in their own way. They are constantly underfoot and a burden to him.

HANNAH

And Penninah pushes me aside whenever she can.

GABRIEL

Are you not your husband's first wife?

HANNAH

Yes.

GABRIEL

Does your husband not love you?

HANNAH

I think he does,

GABRIEL

When you go to Shiloh each year for the festival, does he not give you twice as much meat after the sacrifice of the bull, as he gives Penninah his second wife?

HANNAH

Yes he does.

GABRIEL

At the same time your husband is fair to his children too, for he gives one equal amount for the two children which he himself serves, and so you have two helpings, Penninah has one and the two children has one helping between them.

HANNAH

Yes ... my husband is fair.

GABRIEL

Have you known him to be anything but fair and kind and loving to you?

HANNAH

He has always been that to me, even as he courted me before we were married.

GABRIEL

Does he not pray for a child for you?

HANNAH

He prays.

GABRIEL

Does he not invite you into his bed?

HANNAH

He does ... but sometimes Penninah pushes in instead.

GABRIEL

When this happens then ... does your husband lie with Penninah?

HANAAH

No ... but then again if this happens he does not lie with me.

GABRIEL

Penninah is like a crow who pushes a sparrow out of the nest in the hope that she be seen as a sparrow.

HANNAH

And I am the sparrow?

GABRIEL

Yes. Lie with husband on the night two days hence while you are on the road, and half way to Shiloh. Penninah shall not interfere.

HANNAH

But ... I am still scared.

GABRIEL

Do not be scared little one ... God will protect you and you shall give birth to a son and you will be there to watch him grow ...

[Hannah turns back to the grave and she bows her head. At that very moment the angel spreads his wings and disappears.]

[A wind blows another feather in front of Hannah. She picks the feather up, and now holds one feather in each hand and turns to face the apparition but it has disappeared.]

[She stands and looks about first on the ground and then up into the sky, using her hand to block the sun. She still thinks it is her father. Hannah is agitated]

HANNAH

Father.

[Hannah starts to scurry back along the path looking all over.]

HANNAH

Father ... where are you?

[She approaches the camera. The camera zooms into her face and then her eyes. Her eyes are dilated as if she is fearful.]

HANNAH

I am alone ... where have you gone?

[end of Act One]

SAMUEL ACT TWO

Road To Shiloh Early Evening

[They are on the road to Shiloh. There is a caravan of people including Hannah, Hannah's husband, Penninah, and two children riding on a donkey and who are under a parasol. They are the only ones with parasols].

[Penninah and the two children on the donkey are near the front of the caravan.]

The husband is in the middle of the caravan and Hannah is walking beside him. Hannah and her husband are walking arm in arm talking.]

[Penninah stops, looks back and wipes her hand across her brow.]

PENNINAH

I am tired, let us stop.

[The others continue past her and continue on. As he passes Penninah the husband speaks]

HUSBAND

Not yet. We are not quite half way to Shiloh.

PENNINAH

But I am tired ... let us stop.

[He stops and looks at Hannah]

HUSBAND

Are you tired Hannah?

HANNAH

I can go further. Husband, you tell us when to stop.

[The husband kisses Hannah and then turns back to face Penninah.]

HUSBAND

We will continue on.

PENNINAH

But I have to think of my little ones.

[He looks at the children]

HUSBAND

They are not just your children Penninah. They are my children too.

PENNINAH

I am their mother and I say we should stop!

HUSBAND

I am their father and it looks to me like they can go a bit further.

PENNINAH

Hus ...

[He interrupts her in a loud and firm voice.]

HUSBAND

ENOUGH! I say we continue on.

[he walks ahead leaving Hannah with Penninah]

PENNINAH

What have the two of you been talking about?

HANNAH

Who are you to ask?

PENNINAH

It is my right!

HANNAH

Your right! I am his first wife ...

[Penninah raises her voice]

PENNINAH

And I am the mother of his only children.

[The husband hears what Penninah has said to Hannah and turns back]

HUSBAND

Penninah, you do not need to constantly remind Hannah of that.

PENNINAH

But it is a fact.

HUSBAND

Nor do you constantly need to remind me of that either. Look after the children and leave Hannah in peace.

PENNINAH

Husband!

HUSBAND

That is enough from you Penninah. You will stop tormenting Hannah.

[He lifts his finger to get her to stop. For a moment there is silence. Her husband offers his hand to Hannah.]

HUSBAND

Hannah my love...come walk with me.

[Hannah walks ahead to join her husband, then they continue on their way down the road]

[Penninah hesitates to join them. She shrugs her shoulder as she looks at her children. She then takes a skin with water in it and takes a long drink.]

[She puts the skin back without offering any water to her children.]

YOUNG BOY

Mother may I have some water?

PENNINAH

Wait until we stop.

YOUNG GIRL

Mother may I have some water too.

PENNINAH

No! We are almost there. Keep up!

[Reluctantly Penninah takes the reins of the donkey. They continue on.]

Scene Three

Encampment Night

[The five of them are in a tent.]

[Penninah and her two children are fast asleep.]

[Each person is under their own skin blanket.] [On the right side of the husband is Hannah. On the left side is Penninah and past her the two children].

[Hannah faces her husband, Penninah faces away. Penninah is snoring.]

[There is a single oil lamp near the head of the place where the husband sleeps. It casts a pale light into the tent.

HUSBAND

Hannah ... Love ... are you still awake?

HANNAH

Yes, my husband.

HUSBAND

Are you not tired?

HANNAH

A little. And you?

HUSBAND

A little. Come share my bed.

HANNAH

But Penninah?

HUSBAND

She is fast asleep. Can you not hear her snoring?

[Hannah stands and moves closer to her husband taking her skin with her].

[She lays her skin out and before she can get under it he continues]

HUSBAND

Here now ... take that silly thing off.

HANNAH

And the children ...

[He looks over at the two children]

HUSBAND

They are all fast asleep like their mother. Fear nought!

HANNAH

Are you sure?

HUSBAND

I am sure. Penninah and the children are fast asleep.

[Hannah hesitates then lets her night dress drop and then hurries under the covers. They get close and intimate to each other.]

HUSBAND

You are so soft ...

HANNAH

Here give me your hand.

[Hannah presses his hands on her breasts]

HUSBAND

Such bounties ... I watched you while you suckled the children at your breasts. Penninah's children, those of Rachel and Sarah and Maryam too. You do so, so naturally.

HANNAH

If you remembered after the two were born were born Penninah soon ran dry.

HUSBAND

Given how she is ... you would think that would not happen ...

HANNAH

But she did run dry. Remember how she did not want me to wet nurse the two and you told her if they are not fed they shall soon perish.

HUSBAND

It is good you were here or we would have been need of another wet nurse.

HANNAH

Suckling babies is a woman's duty in a household that is shared.

HUSBAND

Not all woman want to bare their breasts when there are new borns about. The two children would have not survived without you.

HANNAH

You noticed that.

HUSBAND

I did and I thank you for being such a bountiful splendour.

[He pulls back the top of the skin blanket and kisses her breast]

HANNAH

Is that all I am them ...

HUSBAND

No, ... you look after the children as if you were their mother.

HANNAH

And to you ... what am I?

HUSBAND

You have always been a blessing to me. I have prayed ...

HANNAH

Then ... shall we try once more?

HUSBAND

Are you not too tired?

HANNAH

Give me your hand?

[She takes his hand and guides him alluringly]

HUSBAND

You are very soft ... and I stir.

[She kisses him passionately.]

HANNAH

I notice that ...

HUSBAND

My love, you have captivated my heart.

[She kisses him again]

HANNAH

... do you remember the poem you wrote for me when we courted?

HUSBAND

Yes ...The river flowest.

HANNAH

To a land of promise ...

HUSBAND

How far is the land of milk and honey?

HANNAH

Not so far as to be unreachable

HUSBAND

By a simple Journey. One step followed by another.

HANNAH

God shall look over us.

HUSBAND

And guide us to paradise. Where is the entrance?

HANNAH

Here my love ... let us try ...

[The husband extinguishes the lamp. There is the sound of the two other them moving.]

HUSBAND

Am I doing this right?

HANNAH

Yes ... Hus ...

[There is more movement. You can hear the breathing of the two of them getting heavier and more passionate.]

HUSBAND

I am almost in paradise and you ...

HANNAH

I am but a step behind you.

HUSBAND

Do catch up.

HANNAH

Can you slow ... I am almost with you.

HUSBAND

I shall try ... my love.

HANNAH

There we have arrived ...

HUSBAND

Together in Eden.

[The husband is now tired out, lays down and quickly falls asleep.]

[The Angel Gabriel appears at the head of their bed. He is unnoticed by all in the tent but Hannah who sees him.]

[She gets up but does not wrap herself in a skin but kneels before him.]

[She is about to speak when the angel puts his finger to his mouth to tell her to stay quiet. She smiles.]

[Gabriel smiles back and spreads his wings. He then brings his hands together and bows his head in prayer, blesses her and then fades out of view.]

[end of scene].

SAMUEL ACT THREE

Scene One

TENT EARLY EVENING

[Hannah is nine months pregnant and near birth].

[The two children and Hannah are in a tent. It is early evening]

[The two children are playing with Hannah. Penninah enters the tent carrying a heavy basket full of clothes that she has washed and dried.]

PENNINAH

Get away from her.

[The two children stop their playing but do not go away.]

PENNINAH

I said get away from her.

[The husband enters the tent.]

HUSBAND

Leave them be.

PENNINAH

I am their mother and will tell them what to do.

HUSBAND

I am their father ... and your husband ... and I say leave them be.
They are to keep Hannah company.

[She puts down the basket. She stands, straightens her hair.]

PENNINAH

And what happens when she goes into labour?

HUSBAND

Then she goes into labour ...

PENNINAH

I do not want my children around when it is time for her baby.

HUSBAND

And why not. They were about when our neighbours Sarah had hers, and Rachel, and Maryam.

[Hannah tries to stand. Her husband motions her to stay.]

HANNAH

Perhaps she is fearful that mine will be a stillborn.

PENNINAH

And if it is?

HUSBAND

Penninah!

HANNAH

Fear not! I shall give birth to a healthy child.

PENNINAH

Really?

HANNAH

A boy

PENNINAH

A boy ...

HUSBAND

Yes

PENNINAH

You are so certain

HANNAH

I am ...

[As she tries to stand again her water breaks]

HANNAH

and so he comes ... my water has broken.

[Hannah sits back down.]

PENNINAH

Come children we are going ...

[Penninah reaches her hands for her children but then do not come to her.]

HUSBAND

Penninah you would leave Hannah when she needs you the most.

PENNINAH

She can manage.

HUSBAND

You did not manage by yourself when you gave birth to your two children. Hannah was there for you. Will you not be there for her?

[At their mention the two children gather by Hannah each putting a hand on her shoulder.]

HUSBAND

Hannah was there for you both times ... or have you forgotten?

PENNINAH

Come here children ... do as I command.

HUSBAND

Children ... stay where you are!

CHILDREN

Yes father.

HUSBAND

Children go fetch Sarah, Rachel and Maryam. Tell them that Hannah is having her baby.

CHILDREN

Yes father.

[Before they leave both give Hannah a kiss on her cheek and then dash from the tent.]

HUSBAND

Penninah once the other women are here you shall henceforth go to my brother's home.

PENNINAH

No I shall go to my parent's home.

HUSBAND

No you shall not go to your parent's home. You shall go to my brother's home and you shall stay there until I have summoned you back.

PENNINAH

I shall go where I please.

HUSBAND

You shall do as you are commanded. If you go to your parents then my children remain here and you can leave my tent forever!

PENNINAH

Surely you do not mean this!

HUSBAND

Take heed my second wife! I mean this more than anything else I have meant before.

[Hannah cries in pain. Penninah turns to glare at Hannah, but Hannah takes no notice of her.]

PENNINAH

Then ... I have no other choice but to do as you so command.

[Penninah leaves the tent with a flourish and without saying anything more. Hannah cries again.]

HANNAH

Husband ... do not be too harsh on Penninah.

HUSBAND

I shall be as harsh as need be.

[the two children return with three woman.]

HUSBAND

Sarah, Rachel and Maryam. My first wife is giving birth. Hannah helped bring your children into the world. Now it is time for you to repay her kindness ... in kind.

[The three women enter the tent and make busy]

[The children turn and are about to leave]

HUSBAND

Children ... come here.

[The two children run over to their father and stand next to him, one on each side. He takes both children by their hands.]

HUSBAND

Sarah, Rachel and Maryam as you are my witness ... my daughter shall remain here to help

[He sets her on her way. The Daughter goes to Hannah and holds her hand. Then he turns to his son and kneels before him.]

HUSBAND

and you, my son, I command you to take your mother to my brother's home and wait there until I summon your mother and you back.

[He hugs his son.]

SON

Yes father! I shall do as you command.

[The son goes over and kisses Hannah and is about to dash away when he also kisses his sister.]

SON

Sis ... look after Hannah.

[The son leaves the tent.]

HANNAH

You are very wise my husband ...

[The Husband walks over to her and kneels and takes her into his arms.]

HUSBAND

All shall be well?

HANNAH

Yes ... all shall be well.

[He kisses Hannah in a poignant way.]

HANNAH

Don't worry husband. We shall see each other again soon.

[He kisses his daughter and then places a hand on her head.]

HUSBAND

Daughter be brave ... learn well the ways of the world.

[Hannah invites the Daughter to hug her.]

HANNAH

Come sit with me ...

[The daughter sits next to Hannah.]

HANNAH

We shall be brave together.

[The husband moves to the entrance of the tent impatiently guided out by one of the women.]

[The two other women move forward and make Hannah comfortable. She lies back. They pull her dress off her and now she is bare.]

[she cries in pain and leans forward.]

HUSBAND

What was once Paradise's entrance ...

HANNAH

... is now its exit.

[She pushes]

HANNAH

He comes. Be gone my love ... pray for me and our child.

[The husband takes one look back into the tent, blows Hannah a kiss.]

[She blows him a kiss in return.]

[He leaves.]

[end of scene]

Scene Two

[The husband waits outside the tent.]

[The flap of the tent opens and one of the women appears.]

HUSBAND

What news?

[The woman says nothing.]

HUSBAND

Will you not speak?

[She wipes her brow with the back of her arm.]

WOMAN

You men have it easy.

HUSBAND

It must be bad news then.

[The tent flap is opened by the woman and his daughter appears holding a child in swaddling clothes.]

[She holds the child carefully.]

DAUGHTER

Father you have a new son.

[He opens his arms and looks up to heaven.]

HUSBAND

Praise be to God.

[He looks down at his child.]

DAUGHTER

Is he not beautiful?

HUSBAND

Yes daughter he is beautiful.

DAUGHTER

Hannah told me to tell you that he is to be called Samuel.

HUSBAND

Samuel!

DAUGHTER

That is a wonderful name, father.

HUSBAND

So he shall be called Samuel.

[The daughter looks into the swaddling clothes and tickles the baby toes.]

DAUGHTER

Hello Samuel.

[He looks down at the child for a moment then asks]

HUSBAND

And of what of his mother, Hannah?

DAUGHTER

She is tired.

[He turns to the woman.]

WOMAN

By the grace of God and through her courage both Hannah and her child are fine.

HUSBAND

Our prayers have been answered.

HUSBAND

Take then the boy out of the cold and to the warmth of his mother.

DAUGHTER

But Hannah sleeps.

[The husband puts his hand on his daughter's head, kneels and looks earnestly into her eyes.]

HUSBAND

Daughter then it is you who must keep the child warm while his mother sleeps. Unwrap yourself. Take Samuel close to you and keep him warm.

[The daughter holds the baby close to herself.]

DAUGHTER

Yes father.

HUSBAND

Though you be too young to take him to your breasts, hold your brother close to you. Let him lay on you tummy. Do not fall asleep. Watch careful that he breathe and that you not smother him.

DAUGHTER

Yes father ... I shall do as you command.

[He stands]

HUSBAND

Good. You shall watch over little Samuel until Hannah wakes. I will come into the tent shortly.

[The woman opens the flap of the tent and the daughter enters. He turns to the woman.]

HUSBAND

Well?

WOMAN

It was a difficult birth ... at several stops along the way we feared losing both mother and child.

HUSBAND

Are you sure Hannah will be fine?

WOMAN

That which comes after the birth has passed and her bleeding has stopped. Her face has colour and his pulse is weak, yet regular. But

...

HUSBAND

But what?

WOMAN

I fear Hannah may never beget another child.

HUSBAND

For both Hannah and I, one child ... Samuel... is enough.

WOMAN

And ... well ...

HUSBAND

Is there more to tell me?

WOMAN

Yes ... there is more.

HUSBAND

More you say? Get on with it.

WOMAN

Your son arrived at the break of dawn. And as we lifted him up to heaven his first cry was at that very instance met by a ray of bright morning light that entered past the flap in the tent. It was God blessing him.

HUSBAND

Yes ... he is a blessing for Hannah, for me, for his siblings

WOMAN

Not for Penninah?

HUSBAND

That is yet to be imagined.

WOMAN

Miracles do happen.

HUSBAND

Yes ... but miracles only happen to the deserving.

WOMAN

Shall I fetch Penninah?

HUSBAND

No ... not yet.

WOMAN

Shall I send her the good news?

HUSBAND

If my second wife might view it as such.

WOMAN

She might think the news bad?

HUSBAND

Yes she might. No, she can wait.

WOMAN

Oh, I see. Then wait she shall.

HUSBAND

As for me I shall wait outside my tent until Hannah wakes and is ready to see me. I have asked my daughter to keep little Samuel warm and you shall look after them all, will you.

WOMAN

Yes. That is best. Hannah is so right.

[The woman stands and looks at him. He motions her to enter the tent.]

WOMAN

Hannah is so right.

HUSBAND

So right about what?

WOMAN

That you are wise man and a deserving father. Were my husband so

...

[The woman turns and enters the tent.

WOMAN

God has answered your prayers.

HUSBAND

With a little help.

WOMAN

You should know something ...

HUSBAND

What?

WOMAN

Your daughter was very brave and very helpful. Both she and first son are blessings too.

HUSBAND

Oh ... I know that already.

[She lets the flap of the tent drop.]

HUSBAND

Thank you Lord for blessing us both with a miracle.

[end of scene]

Scene Three

Encampment Day

[Husband is waiting for his brother, Penninah and his Son. He is pacing back and forth in an agitated state.]

HUSBAND

Where are they? They should have been here hours ago?

[He sees his son at a distance.]

HUSBAND

What is this?

HUSBAND

Perhaps my son has run ahead because he is eager to meet his new brother.

[His daughter opens the flap of the tent but does not step out.]

DAUGHTER

Can you see them father?

HUSBAND

Only your older brother.

[The daughter looks out in the distance and see her older brother. She then looks at her father.]

DAUGHTER

That is odd. Mother never lets him walk by himself when we travel.

[He turns to her and she realizes the awkwardness of what she has just said.]

DAUGHTER

Father, do not worry. Come into the tent and come play with little Samuel.

HUSBAND

I will come and play with you both in a few minutes.

[She closes the flap of the tent. You can hear joyful sounds from within the tent.]

HUSBAND

Perhaps my first son has run ahead to tell me that his mother and my brother are some distance behind him.

[He paces back and forth]

HUSBAND

By my daughter is right. Penninah would never let him walk by himself when we travel.

[Hannah appears at the flap of the tent, but does not step out from within. She looks tired]

HUSBAND

How are you my love?

HANNAH

I am tired ... but apart from that I am fine.

HUSBAND

You look beautiful my love.

HANNAH

You would say that to me even if I were at death's door.

HUSBAND

Hannah ... you are very beautiful.

HANNAH

Thank you my love.

HUSBAND

It is good that you are up and walking. And our son?

HANNAH

Samuel is fine. He has an appetite!

HUSBAND

I am happy to hear that.

HANNAH

Your daughter and I will shortly give Samuel his bath. Will you not come and help?

HUSBAND

No ... I leave you two to look after Samuel.

HANNAH

Is everything fine with you my husband? You cannot take your eyes off the road.

HUSBAND

As fine as it can be my love. Do not worry. Everything will turn out fine.

HANNAH

So everything is not fine.

HUSBAND

You and Samuel are both healthy and doing well. That is all that matters at the moment?

HANNAH

And what of the rest of our family?

HUSBAND

You need not worry about the rest of our family. That is for me to worry.

HANNAH

Am I not your first wife?

HUSBAND

Am I not your husband?

[Hannah looks out in the distance and see his first son.]

HANNAH

Yes ... I see your first son approaching.

HUSBAND

Yes my first son comes.

HANNAH

But where is ...

[he cuts her off.]

HUSBAND

Where indeed!

HANNAH

It has been four days since Samuel's birth.

HUSBAND

I know, I know.

HANNAH

We circumcise him four days hence.

[He waves his arms.]

HUSBAND

Go back into the tent and rest. Fret not. Look after your son and yourself. Leave everything else to me. I will talk to my first son alone.

HANNAH

Yes my husband,

[Hannah lets the flap of the tent drop. The first son is now at the camp.]

SON

Hello Father.

HUSBAND

Hello my son. Where is your mother?

[He looks past his son up the road.]

SON

Gone.

HUSBAND

Gone where?

SON

I do not know father.

HUSBAND

You do not know! I find that hard to believe. I ask you again, where is your mother.

SON

Honestly father, I do not know.

HUSBAND

How can this be?

SON

When I awoke this morning she and her things were gone.

HUSBAND

How come you travel the roads by yourself? Where is my brother?

SON

Uncle is out looking for her. Uncle sent me home and gave me this to give you.

[The son hands his father a small parchment. He takes the parchment and notices the seal is broken.

HUSBAND

The seal is broken!

SON

Yes father.

HUSBAND

Then you have read this!

SON

Yes.

HUSBAND

Why ... by what right?

SON

Because she is my mother!

HUSBAND

She might be your mother ... but Penninah is my wife.

[he reads the parchment and then looks up and glares at his son.]

SON

Uncle thinks that she has gone back to visit grandfather and grandmother.

HUSBAND

That is not what he says.

[The son begins to cry.]

SON

Uncle says she has gone to visit her parents.

HUSBAND

No ... he does not say that she has gone to visit ... he says he believes that Penninah has gone back to her parents.

SON

You see father we do not know where she has gone. Neither does Uncle.

HUSBAND

So you do speak the truth.

SON

You have taught me father that the truth is most important in life.

HUSBAND

So it is! But it is Moses who taught us all this.

[The son says nothing. The husband reads the parchment again.]

HUSBAND

Penninah ... my second wife ... your mother ... has told my brother she will not be coming back here. Where else can she go except back to her parents?

SON

Will we ever see her again?

HUSBAND

I don't know. We circumcise Samuel in four days. If Penninah is not here then ...

[The husband stops and turns his back on his son. The boy stares for a moment at his father without saying anything then he starts for the tent.]

[The husband stops him before he enters the tent.]

HUSBAND

Go to the river and wash yourself and change into new clothes. Then come back to see me before you enter the tent. We have a new born amongst us and we have to be clean to keep him safe.

SON

But father it has been a long journey and I am hungry and thirsty.

HUSBAND

You now have a younger brother named Samuel. You must look out for your younger brother as dearly as you look out for your sister.

SON

Yes father. I love my sister dearly. I have yet to meet Samuel ... he is my brother and as dear to me as my sister.

HUSBAND

I am happy to hear this. Go to the river. I shall get you food and drink.

SON

What about my mother Penninah?

HUSBAND

It is best that I am the one to tell my first wife and my daughter what has happened.

[the son walks slowly towards the river]

[After the son is gone, the flap opens and the daughter looks out. She is carrying Samuel.]

DAUGHTER

I heard voices ...

HUSBAND

It is your older brother.

DAUGHTER

And where is our mother?

HUSBAND

Be patient my daughter. Your older brother and I will enter the tent when he comes back from washing himself in the river.

[She makes a move to step out of the tent to look for her brother.]

HUSBAND

Stay in the tent with Hannah and your brother Samuel.

DAUGHTER

I want to show him the new born.

HUSBAND

Hannah should be the one to introduce Samuel to his older brother.
Go give Samuel back to his mother.

DAUGHTER

I want to say hello to my brother.

HUSBAND

After you have given Samuel back to his mother, gather up food and drink for your older brother and bring it here and set it down at the my feet.

DAUGHTER

But father ... I want to hear news of my mother.

HUSBAND

We shall both be along to speak of this shortly. Be a good girl now.

DAUGHTER

Yes father.

[She sounds dejected but does what she is told. She lets the flap drop.]

[In a moment she returns with food and drink which she places at her father's feet. Then she re-enters the tent.]

[The first son reappears breathless because he has been running. All he wears is a loin cloth.]

FIRST SON

Was that my sister with little Samuel.

HUSBAND

Yes it was. Where is you robe son.

FIRST SON

I left my dusty and dirty robe washing in the river. My new robe is with my other things in the tent.

[he motions to the food and drink]

HUSBAND

Oh I see. You said you were hungry and thirsty. Your sister has brought this for you from inside our tent. Eat then.

[He takes a piece of bread and some drink and eats while they talk.]

FIRST SON

And what will happen to my mother?

HUSBAND

What of Penninah you mean?

FIRST SON

Yes Penninah.

[He says Penninah in an anguished tone.]

HUSBAND

It was wrong that she was not here for the birth of Samuel. It is doubly wrong that she has not returned as I have commanded.

SON

Can you not go to talk with her?

HUSBAND

It is a three days journey there and three more back. I will not leave Hannah and my new born son Samuel to go to plead with Penninah.

SON

If you do not go to her she will think herself forgotten.

HUSBAND

Be careful son and remember who you speak with.

SON

I am sorry father. I am just so worried.

HUSBAND

What do you have to worry about?

SON

That you will no longer love me and my sister.

HUSBAND

Did Penninah say that! Oh silly boy. You are but a toy in someone else's game!

SON

A toy?

HUSBAND

Pawns in her game of chess.

SON

Father?

HUSBAND

I love both of you as dearly as I love little Samuel.

[the boy starts to cry.]

SON

How could I be so foolish father?

HUSBAND

You are not the fool. Your Penninah is. She plays a game ... a game
that I do not wish to play.

SON

I am so sorry to worry you father.

HUSBAND

You and your sister are no worry to me.

SON

What will happen now?

HUSBAND

If Penninah is not here when we circumcise Samuel four days hence, I am at a loss to know what can be done. She will have done more than just disrespected me, her husband.

[He is about to say something when the son decides to say nothing.

HUSBAND

If she is not here when we circumcise Samuel she will have disrespected God, and that cannot be forgiven.

SON

Shall I go then to get her?

HUSBAND

If you leave she may never let you come back to us. It is best that you stay.

SON

I understand.

HUSBAND

Let me speak to your sister and Hannah. If they ask you any questions let me answer. Do you understand?

FIRST SON

Yes father.

HUSBAND

Then let us go in the tent and Hannah will introduce you to your new brother.

[The Husband puts his hand on his son's shoulder and the two enter the tent]

[end of scene]

SAMUEL ACT FOUR

Scene One

Encampment Circumcision Day

[There is crying from within the tent]

[The flap opens and out comes the Husband, the Son and the Daughter.]

HUSBAND

There ... Samuel is circumcised. He is now one of us.

DAUGHTER

Father. Why must boys be circumcised?

HUSBAND

God asks this of us.

SON

Why are girls not circumcised then father. Does God not ask this too?

DAUGHTER

What might God want to take from me? There is nothing there to take!

SON

I don't know. There is nothing to take is there?

DAUGHTER

There is nothing I might want to give up, if that is what you are really asking.

SON

How can I ask ... when all this is still a mystery to me.

[He tugs at her robe and she slaps his hand away.]

DAUGHTER

As it should be ...

HUSBAND

Stop teasing your sister.

SON

Why was my sister allowed to stay and help Hannah give birth to Samuel and not I? I am the eldest.

HUSBAND

Giving life to a baby is a woman's role ... this God has decided.

DAUGHTER

You are a boy!

SON

Need you remind me this constantly as if this were a curse or a burden!

HUSBAND

Stop this quarreling my children! It is not ours to ask such questions ... leave such questions to the synagogue and the wise men. Come into the tent and out of the mid-day sun.

[The husband enters the tent.]

DAUGHTER

Brother I just tease you.

SON

Is it true?

DAUGHTER

Is what true?

SON

That you were watched as Samuel was born.

DAUGHTER

Yes. It was remarkable. His entrance into the world was slow. Sarah described it as the shortest but most important journey that we all will ever take.

SON

And?

DAUGHTER

And what?

SON

Tell me more!

[she giggles.]

DAUGHTER

No ... it's best you ask Hannah such questions.

SON

And not father?

DAUGHTER

The birth of a child is for doctors, midwives and woman only.

SON

But you are but a girl, not a woman.

DAUGHTER

A girl ... not anymore.

SON

Says who?

DAUGHTER

Says Hannah.

SON

You are not a woman ... you have no breasts.

DAUGHTER

You know ... I am still young ... but they will come.

SON

So how can it be you are a woman?

DAUGHTER

Hannah let me cut the cord.

SON

The cord?

DAUGHTER

That what joined baby to mother when Samuel was inside Hannah?

SON

Surely you gest!

DAUGHTER

No I don't. And I was the first to hold Samuel when the midwife gave him to be held. Hannah let me hold him first.

SON

So?

DAUGHTER

And father ask me to keep Samuel warm in the hours after his birth.

[They both go quiet.]

SON

I am sad that mother Penninah was not here to help Hannah.

DAUGHTER

Yes she is not here. Sarah told me that when we were both born
Hannah helped in so many ways. She was the one who cut our cords
and held us first.

SON

Hannah is a wonderful person!

DAUGHTER

So where is our mother Penninah?

SON

Father says that our mother has gone back to her parents.

DAUGHTER

What will happen?

SON

I do not know. I wonder if we will ever see our mother again?

DAUGHTER

Father said for us not to worry. He says we have Hannah.

SON

Hannah is not our mother.

DAUGHTER

Hannah was there when we were both born. Hannah took us to her own breasts and fed us and helped us grow.

SON

So did Sarah, Rachel and Maryam I am told.

DAUGHTER

Who told you this?

SON

Penninah.

DAUGHTER

Of this she did not tell the truth, for Sarah, Rachel and Maryam told me so.

SON

Than Hannah is our mother too.

DAUGHTER

Yes, she is. And if I were old enough I would take Samuel to my breasts and feed him.

[the son gets angry]

SON

But Samuel is your brother.

DAUGHTER

It is a woman's role. He is a baby ... who happens to be my brother.

SON

I can't understand you woman

[The son storms away.]

DAUGHTER

If you keep this up, you never will.

[The daughter enters the tent.

[end of scene]

Scene Two

Synagogue Day

[Hannah enters carrying Samuel. The synagogue is empty.]

[She kneels and sets Samuel on the ground before her and un-wraps him in his swaddling clothes.]

[Hannah opens her arms and looks up to heaven and prays]

HANNAH

“My heart rejoices in the LORD;
in the LORD my horn is lifted high.
My mouth boasts over my enemies,
for I delight in your deliverance.

There is no one holy like the LORD;
there is no one besides you;
there is no Rock like our God.

[She starts to weep]

HANNAH

Do not keep talking so proudly
or let your mouth speak such arrogance,
for the LORD is a God who knows,
and by him deeds are weighed.

The bows of the warriors are broken,
but those who stumbled are armed with strength.

Those who were full hire themselves out for food,
but those who were hungry are hungry no more.
She who was barren has borne seven children,
but she who has had many sons pines away.

[She gathers her robe close around her and bows to the ground.]

HANNAH

The LORD brings death and makes alive;
he brings down to the grave and raises up.
The LORD sends poverty and wealth;
he humbles and he exalts.

He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap;
he seats them with princes

and has them inherit a throne of honor.

“For the foundations of the earth are the LORD’s;
on them he has set the world.

[Hannah sits up, pauses and then wraps her son in his swaddling clothes.
She picks him up and holds her close to herself. She stands.]

HANNAH

He will guard the feet of his faithful servants,
but the wicked will be silenced in the place of darkness.
It is not by strength that one prevails;
those who oppose the LORD will be broken.

[She opens her robe and presses Samuel to her breast.]

[A light comes down from heaven and the angel Gabriel appears in the background.]

[She does not see the angel because he is behind her high up and looking down.]

HANNAH

The Most High will thunder from heaven;

the LORD will judge the ends of the earth.

“He will give strength to his king
and exalt the horn of his anointed.”

[A wind starts to blow from with the synagogue. It is Gabriel flapping his wings.]

[Hannah’s hair flows in the wind and a halo appears around her head and that of her son Samuel.]

[A feather floats down in front of her and she turns around and sees the angel Gabriel. He stops flapping his wings.]

HANNAH

You were with me at my mother’s grave.

[Gabriel nods.]

HANNAH

You visited me after Samuel was conceived.

[Gabriel nods.]

HANNAH

You are here with us today.

[Hannah looks down at her son. Gabriel smiles back and spreads his wings.]

[See looks up at him.]

HANNAH

Will you not speak to me?

GABRIEL

I have always been with you ... as I shall always be with you. Your son Samuel will grow to be a wise and important man.

[Hannah lifts Samuel and kisses him on his forehead.]

GABRIEL

And you shall live to see your great grandchildren ...

[Hannah hugs Samuel.]

[Gabriel then brings his hands together and bows his head in prayer and blesses her.]

GABRIEL

Go with God.

[The angel Gabriel fades out of view.]

[Hannah begins to cry as she walks out of the synagogue holding little Samuel close to her.]

[Fade out]

[end of scene].

The End.

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